



MARINELA

HOLISTIC EDUCATION

BARBADOS



*A Waldorf-Inspired Private School in Barbados.
Rooted in Beauty and Balance.*

FAMILY HANDBOOK

Contents

1. Welcome to Marinela Holistic Education	3
2. What Sets Marinela Apart	4
3. How Does Marinela Achieve This?	6
4. Our Teaching Approach	8
5. How We Educate	9
6. Embracing Parents as Partners	10
7. Little Seeds – Parent and Caregiver Sessions	12
8. A Gentle Introduction to Kindergarten	13
9. A Dynamic Flow in Elementary Education	14
10. The Transition from Kindergarten to Grade School	15
11. Academic Programmes in Waldorf Education	17
12. Festival Celebrations	18
13. Arrival and Collection	23
14. Attendance and Absence	23
15. Healthy Rhythms and Sleep	24
16. Health and Wellbeing	25
17. Sun, Water and the Pool	26
18. Keeping Children Safe	27
19. Our Approach to Discipline	29
20. Cleanliness and Care for Our Space	31
21. Health, Immunisation and Family Choice	32
22. Connection with Nature	32
23. Use of Privately Shared Spaces on School Grounds	33
24. Screen Policy	34
25. Photography and Media	35
26. Clothing	36
27. What to Bring to School	37
28. The Documents Behind This Handbook	38
29. Gratitude and Closing	39

Version 3.3 • Academic Year 2026–2027 • Approved by: Peter Chambers (Principal / CEO) • Date: 25/08/2026
Next review: August 2027 • Master copy held in the School's Google Drive.

Where anything in this Handbook differs from the School's **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**, the Safeguarding Policy applies.



1. Welcome to Marinela Holistic Education

We are delighted to welcome you to Marinela Holistic Education, where education becomes an art form, and childhood is honoured as a sacred and formative stage of life.

Our Unique Approach

Marinela is a private, boutique school nestled in the heart of Barbados's nature. With deep love, care and responsibility, we have cultivated an environment where mindful learning, a profound connection to the natural world and high academic standards come together in harmony.

We offer a world-class education through a developmental journey that is richer, more beautiful and filled with meaning, crafted for families who value essence above convention.



2. What Sets Marinela Apart



Our Educational Philosophy

We believe education must be whole-reaching, not only the child's mind but also their soul, body, emotions, dreams and rhythms.



A Child-Centred Philosophy

At the core of our approach is the individual child. Every initiative is rooted in profound respect for the child's inner world, natural rhythms, age and temperament.



Rhythm, Warmth and Individuality

We align our activities with the natural flow of the day, the seasons and life itself, fostering stability and inner grounding.



An International Teaching Team

Our educators are highly skilled professionals, inspired and trained at some of the world's leading educational institutions. All employees with responsibility for children are vetted before unsupervised contact begins, and all our educators are trained in safeguarding. Visiting teachers, coaches and external providers are vetted, or remain supervised at all times until their checks are complete.



A Lush 15-Acre Campus

Our expansive grounds feature an animal farm, a fruit orchard, gardens, a pond, a tennis court, a swimming pool and more.



Light-Filled Architecture

Our facilities are thoughtfully designed to foster beauty, harmony and a sense of inner tranquillity.



A Holistic Approach

We weave together academic learning with art, movement, music, gardening, quiet time and play, creating a unified and vibrant educational experience. We view the child as a being whose body, emotions, soul and intellect develop simultaneously. Therefore, learning at Marinela occurs through a combination of mind and hands-on experiences, emotional engagement, purposeful action and a deep connection to nature.



Nutrition

A crucial component of our holistic approach is nutrition, which involves maintaining a balanced and healthy diet. At Marinela, nutrition is an integral part of the learning experience. We encourage children to view food as a source of strength, a way to express gratitude and a means of connecting with the Earth. All meals provided to the children are prepared with love and care. We prioritise fresh, wholesome ingredients and, wherever practicable, organic and minimally processed foods.

- We serve nourishing, plant-based meals.
- Our menu includes fruits, vegetables and greens cultivated in our gardens.
- We provide clean drinking water, freshly pressed juices and a variety of seasonal fruits and vegetables.
- Seasonal produce from our own gardens is incorporated whenever available, often harvested with the children's help.



Honouring Tradition and Innovation

We value the harmony between tradition and innovation, grounded in solid pedagogical principles, whilst remaining receptive to the world, the children and the times they live in.

- We create an environment that nurtures beauty, encourages focus and ignites curiosity about the world.
- Our diverse team of educators brings expertise in Waldorf pedagogy, anthroposophy and holistic methods. We support our educators with ongoing professional guidance, development and the freedom to flourish.
- We are committed to continuous learning, working to benefit the children and their future, aiming to prepare them for success.
- We are crafting a school where every brick, classroom and aspect of the schedule is designed with love, focusing on nurturing strong, whole and radiant individuals.

3. How Does Marinela Achieve This?

Rhythm of the Day: The Child's Adventure

At Marinela, children thrive in mixed-age classrooms – a choice that is both intentional and meaningful. This environment feels more natural, vibrant and human. Younger children learn by watching their older peers – how they communicate, behave and demonstrate care and kindness. Meanwhile, older children blossom in responsibility and leadership roles, supporting, guiding and modelling positive behaviour, not out of obligation but as part of a nurturing community.

A Gentle Introduction to School

The journey to school begins well before the first day. We honour this transition by providing a gentle introduction: whenever possible, each teacher meets their new student at least once before the start of the school year. This meeting may take place at School, or in another calm setting such as your home or a park. A parent or caregiver is always present for any individual meeting held outside School.

Inspired by the Waldorf tradition, this practice sees teachers actively engaging with children, entering their world with warmth and an open heart. These quiet, intentional meetings lay the groundwork for trust, connection and meaningful relationships.

A Balanced Daily Rhythm

Our days unfold in a steady, nourishing rhythm, woven with movement, beauty and moments of joyful learning. After such enriching experiences, we believe that home is the most nurturing place for rest, offering the comforting familiarity of the child's own space. For this reason, we do not schedule nap time during the school day. Instead, we warmly encourage families to provide rest at home, supporting a natural balance of activity and tranquillity.

Gentle Care in Our Youngest Groups

In our youngest groups, we approach physical care with gentleness, attentiveness and respect. Nappy changing, dressing and washing are never hurried or mechanical; they are moments of communication and connection. We explain to the child what is happening, and let them do what they can for themselves. We offer each touch with warmth and carry out every action with a sense of presence.

Behind that warmth sit clear rules, set out in full in our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy:

- Only named members of staff whose checks are complete give intimate care;
- Doors are never locked, and another adult can always come in;
- Your preferences are agreed when your child joins us, and recorded;
- Every nappy change or soiling is recorded and shared with you the same day;
- Any mark, bruise or soreness we notice is recorded and reported to our Designated Safeguarding Lead;
- No phones or cameras are used in changing areas, by anyone.

4. Our Teaching Approach

Embracing the Waldorf-Inspired Educational Approach

As a Waldorf-inspired school, our teaching is a vibrant art form, enriched with rhythm, reverence, creativity and meaning. Central to our philosophy is the whole child, encompassing their head, heart and hands.

Rich in the Arts

Music, painting, handwork, drama and movement are woven into our daily learning, nurturing creativity and self-expression. Children actively participate in activities such as watercolour painting, illustration, playing the flute, recorder or ukulele, singing, reciting, knitting, crocheting, woodworking, pottery and making nature crafts.

The Power of Storytelling

Stories ignite imagination, enhance vocabulary and captivate children's attention profoundly and memorably. Through storytelling, they learn mathematics, history, geography, science, and reading and writing.

Deep Connection to Nature

Outdoor exploration is a vital aspect of our daily routine. Children investigate Barbados' diverse flora and fauna, fostering a sense of stewardship and nurturing a deep connection with the natural world, particularly through hands-on nature studies.

Practical Life Skills

Children engage in meaningful, real-life tasks such as cooking, cleaning, sewing, gardening and building. These activities cultivate confidence, independence and a natural sense of responsibility.

Screen-Free Learning

In the early years, we intentionally minimise the use of technology. We encourage families to limit screen time, preserving the richness of childhood whilst supporting imagination and healthy development.

Main Lesson Blocks

Teachers introduce academic subjects through immersive main lesson blocks that span three to four weeks. This approach enables children to build a lasting connection with each subject through exploration, conversation and creative expression.

5. How We Educate

Long-Term Teacher Relationships

Teachers often accompany their class for several years, fostering a deep and evolving relationship that supports each child's journey and enables a personalised approach.

Reverence and Rhythm

Seasonal studies, festivals and cultural celebrations are integrated throughout the year, grounding children in natural cycles, heritage and a sense of belonging.

Education for the Whole Child

We nurture the child's intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual development, supporting growth in both heart and mind.

Holistic Assessments

We believe that children develop at their own pace, and we celebrate each child's unique journey. We meet with parents twice a year to discuss their child's learning and progress, and provide a written reflection at the end of the school year.

Movement

Each day offers opportunities for free movement and imaginative play. All children take part in a weekly movement and physical education class, with swimming also offered when appropriate.

"There are three primary virtues we must develop in the child: gratitude, love and responsibility. These three virtues are the foundation upon which the whole of social life is built."

— Rudolf Steiner, *Education of the Child*, April 15, 1923.

6. Embracing Parents as Partners

At Marinela Holistic Education, we view parents as co-creators of the space and as integral to the circle in which the child grows. Your presence, voice and insight are essential to holistic education. A child thrives when home and school work harmoniously, creating a strong, supportive foundation for learning and growth.

We value human connection and open communication, and are always happy to discuss your child's observations and answer any questions.

Parents are an integral part of our school community. We encourage active participation through:

- **Regular communication** between teachers and families, which promotes mutual understanding.
- **Workshops and parent educational opportunities** to enhance knowledge of child development and Waldorf pedagogy.
- **Seasonal festivals and celebrations** that bring families together to experience the year's rhythm.
- **Class meetings** that ensure a collaborative approach to each child's learning journey and promote mutual support among parents.

We invite you to:

- Join seasonal gatherings where we explore child development, share pedagogical insights, enjoy poetry and music, ask questions and journey through the year together.
- Attend individual meetings to share observations, listen to reflections and celebrate your child's growth.
- Feel free to engage in open, ongoing dialogue whenever you wish to share joy, concerns, questions or gratitude.
- Help prepare and decorate the classrooms for seasonal celebrations.
- Take part in our community workdays.
- Share your skills and creativity in workshops.
- Bring your energy and warmth into the environment where your child is growing.

We believe in shared responsibility – we hold it together.

A warm note about helping

When you join us for a festival, a workshop, a workday or classroom preparation, you come as a guest of the School rather than as a member of staff. Please sign in at the office when you arrive, stay with the group and leave the care of the children to the teachers. An adult who has not completed the School's checks is never left alone with a child other than their own.

This is not about trust in you. It is a standard we hold for every adult on our site, and it is precisely what allows us to be as open as we are.

We also keep you informed of your child's progress through:

- **Work Presentations**, where you are invited into our classrooms to observe the children's work. These may include a song or poetic recitation, times tables practised through movement, a display of our books and projects or a performance of a class play.
- **Weekly Newsletters**, which include photographs and summaries of classroom and outdoor experiences, are shared privately with our families.
- **Parent-Teacher Conferences**, held twice a year and available for booking at any time throughout the year.
- **Progress Reports**, which we provide at the end of the school year, offering thoughtful, holistic reflections that summarise your child's journey.

A note on communication

Our teachers do not share personal contact details with children or connect with children or families through personal social media accounts. All communication comes through School accounts and the School number, so that nothing important is ever lost in a private message.

7. Little Seeds – Parent and Caregiver Sessions

Wonder, Play and the Roots of Discovery...

Little Seeds children come to School with a parent or caregiver, which makes these mornings a little different from the rest of the school day. They are a first, gentle taste of school life – for the child, and often for the family too. Because a parent or caregiver is present throughout, Little Seeds does not include Trial Days.

- The adult who comes stays responsible for their own child throughout the session.
- Please do not take charge of another family's child. A child is helped with toileting or nappy changing only by their own parent or caregiver, or by a vetted member of staff.
- If your child needs the bathroom in the main building, please go with them.
- You are welcome to photograph your own child during Little Seeds sessions. Please do not photograph or record another child unless that child's parent or caregiver has expressly agreed, and please do not publish or share images containing other children without their parent's or caregiver's permission.
- At your first session, we provide a brief summary of our safeguarding rules and how to raise a concern. Please ask us if you have not received it.

These are not distant formalities. They are what allow us to open our doors to families as widely as we do.

8. A Gentle Introduction to Kindergarten

Nurturing Each Child's Journey

At Marinela Holistic Education, we hold a profound respect and sensitivity for each child's inner world. The transition from home to school represents a significant step. This journey can be gentle, peaceful and warm when approached with care and trust.

We recognise that every child is unique. Some are prepared from the first day to say goodbye effortlessly and embrace their new environment; others may require more time, presence and gentle support.

Before enrolment, every child joining Kindergarten spends three trial days with us, so that the classroom, the teacher and the rhythm of the day become familiar.

We also offer various approaches to fostering independence:

For ready children: they may joyfully bid farewell at the door and enthusiastically begin their day.

For children who need a little more time: we offer a gentle beginning. During the trial days you are welcome to stay close by, in reception or another designated area outside the classroom.

Once your child has started school, the classroom belongs to the children and their teachers, and parents do not remain in the room during the school day. This is not distance – it is what allows a child to settle into the group and find their own place within it.

If your child needs extra support settling, please talk to us. We can agree that you stay for a short, agreed period in reception or another designated area outside the classroom, and we will review it together as your child grows in confidence. Please, no electronic devices in the classroom.

During morning drop-off and pick-up, we actively support you and your child through these transitions. At the same time, our priority is to warmly welcome each child and help them begin their day with focus and ease. We'd like to ask that any extended conversations take place after pick-up, once all the children have left for the day.

9. A Dynamic Flow in Elementary Education

Nurturing Each Child's Journey

At Marinela Holistic Education's Elementary School, children embark on a transformative journey, brimming with curiosity, growing self-awareness and a deep desire to comprehend the world and their place within it.

Every day unfolds like a beautifully orchestrated symphony, offering a rhythm that nurtures the child's entire being: a harmonious blend of thinking, feeling and doing.

The day begins with a morning circle, where children warmly greet their teacher, recite a morning verse, sing seasonal songs and exercise with beanbags.

With their bodies invigorated and spirits uplifted, they joyfully engage in gardening, animal care, swimming or sports, thereby connecting firmly with the rhythms of nature and community.

At the heart of each day is the Main Lesson, a two-hour thematic exploration of subjects such as literature, history, mathematics or science. Teachers explore these subjects over multi-week blocks using rich storytelling, artistic endeavours, song, movement and hands-on experiences. Each lesson transitions from memory and reflection into creativity and discovery, encouraging children to engage deeply with the material and their inner worlds.

Children are given ample time for open-ended play, nourishing meals shared around a candlelit table and practical and artistic activities that strengthen skills and willpower, such as painting, handwork and form drawing. In the afternoons, they engage in special subjects such as music, movement, cooking or games, which foster expression, integration and joy.

As the day comes to a close, children gather again in a warm, reverent atmosphere to reflect, sing and bid farewell, carrying home the tranquillity of rhythm, the inspiration of meaningful learning and the enduring light of belonging.

10. The Transition from Kindergarten to Grade School

A new stage. A new rhythm. A new maturity.

The shift from Kindergarten to Grade 1 in Waldorf education is a significant and vital phase in a child's development. This transition is a thoughtful process that requires gentle attention and mutual understanding from educators and parents.

Age and Readiness

This transition generally occurs between the ages of six and seven, signalling a certain level of maturity – physically, emotionally, socially and in willpower. Many Waldorf schools use June 1st as a guideline: if a child turns six by this date, they may be eligible for entry into Grade 1 the following school year. However, age is not the sole criterion; the child's inner readiness is our primary focus.

Indicators of School Readiness include:

- A strengthened physical body, with steady posture and coordinated movements.
- The ability to concentrate and remain still for extended periods.
- A natural curiosity and interest in learning.
- Comfort in engaging with peers and teachers in group settings.
- A willingness to follow the teacher that stems from trust and respect rather than mere affection.

These indicators help us recognise when a child is prepared to embark on a new developmental journey.

How the Transition Happens

The move from Kindergarten to Grade School is not abrupt; it is a gentle unfolding. In Kindergarten, children thrive in free play, imagination and sensory exploration. As they enter the early grades, these qualities continue to flourish, complemented by:

- Gentle structure.
- The first steps in literacy and numeracy.
- An emerging sense of form and focus.
- All taught through movement, rhythm, storytelling and the arts.

We create a bridge connecting these two realms, allowing the child to cross confidently and joyfully.

The Role of Parents and Teachers

In this journey, teachers and parents walk alongside one another. Together, we observe, listen, reflect and remain attuned to the child's pace and development. We avoid rushing or forcing progress. Instead, we move alongside the child, trusting in their natural timing whilst offering consistent, loving support.

11. Academic Programmes in Waldorf Education

Why Formal Learning Begins at Ages 6–7

Formal academic instruction begins around age 6 or 7 in the Waldorf education system. This method is deeply rooted in a comprehensive understanding of child development, aiming to foster timely, balanced and holistic learning.

Child Development and Readiness for Learning

Rudolf Steiner outlined three essential phases in child development:

1. Early Childhood (birth to ~7 years)

At this stage, children primarily learn through imitation, play and rich sensory experiences. We intentionally delay formal academic instruction until the child reaches physical and emotional readiness, often signalled by several factors, including the loss of baby teeth.

2. Middle Childhood (ages 7–14)

Formal education begins, emphasising imagination, storytelling, artistic expression and emotional engagement.

3. Adolescence (14+ years)

The focus gradually shifts to abstract thinking and independent reasoning.

Why We Wait

Our approach grows from a long tradition in Waldorf education and a broad body of thinking about early childhood: that children who are given time to play, move, listen and imagine before formal instruction begins tend to come to reading and writing with greater appetite and to stay with it. We are always glad to talk this through with you, and to share the reading that has shaped our thinking.

How Reading and Writing Are Practised in Waldorf Schools

In Waldorf schools, teachers introduce reading and writing through rich oral storytelling. Rather than presenting letters as abstract symbols, they bring them to life as images that arise from meaningful stories and artistic expression.

This imaginative, experience-based approach helps children form a personal and joyful connection with language, making the transition into literacy a natural, embodied and meaningful experience.

12. Festival Celebrations

At Marinela Holistic Education, we believe that life is a beautiful dance of rhythms, and our festivals are a heartfelt expression of this belief. Here in Barbados, we are blessed with a unique natural rhythm – bright sun, warm wind, evergreen leaves and the shimmering sea. Our celebrations don't follow the traditional European model of distinct winters and summers; instead, they reflect the profound inner cycles of life itself – the gentle ebb and flow of breathing in and out, the vibrant dance of growth and rest, and the interplay of light and shadow.

Not only at Marinela Holistic Education but also in Waldorf schools worldwide, **festivals are far more than mere events**; they are vital threads woven into the fabric of the school year, enriching the lives of children, families and teachers alike.

Just as the breath sustains life, festivals provide rhythmic anchors throughout the year, marking time in a meaningful way. They help children develop a sense of anticipation, memory and an unconscious appreciation for the unfolding of time. This mirrors the natural rhythms of nature, which, in our unique Barbadian context, allows us to connect deeply with the continuous cycles of light and life.

Each festival presents archetypal images and stories. These “living pictures” are not just intellectual concepts but **experiences that nurture the child's feelings, life and imagination**, offering spiritual nourishment and a sense of wonder.

Festivals are powerful community builders. Through shared preparations – crafting, cooking, storytelling and singing – and the collective experience of celebration, a strong sense of belonging is fostered. Families come together, supporting one another and **creating enduring memories** that strengthen the bonds of our school community.

Waldorf festivals often echo humanity's long-standing connection to the earth, the cosmos and the spiritual world. While we adapt these themes to our tropical environment, the essence remains: to cultivate reverence for life, gratitude for nature's gifts and an understanding of our place within the greater whole.

Each festival is an invitation to **connect with these deeper rhythms**, fostering a sense of wonder, community and reverence for the world around us. We hope this calendar serves as a joyful guide through our year of meaningful celebrations, inviting you to join us in these enriching experiences that nourish the spirit and strengthen our collective journey.

September – A Time of Courage, Gratitude and New Beginnings

The Flower Ceremony

On the first day of the new school year, we joyfully reconvene as a vibrant community. The Flower Ceremony is a cherished tradition that extends a warm embrace to all students, parents and teachers, marking their return from the summer break. It's a collective celebration of growth, anticipation and the shared journey ahead.

Each student, guided by their family, brings a single flower, contributing to a magnificent central bouquet that symbolises the diverse beauty and unity of our school. Through uplifting songs and heartfelt reflections, we collectively acknowledge the new beginnings and the renewed commitment to learning and discovery that the academic year brings.

This ceremony is a powerful affirmation of our community's spirit. We honour the growth experienced over the summer and welcome everyone across the threshold into a new chapter of collaborative learning, friendship and shared experiences.

The Rose Ceremony

Intertwined with the broader welcome, the Rose Ceremony is a deeply moving rite of passage specifically for our new first-grade class and their parents on their inaugural day of school. This intimate ceremony acknowledges the profound significance of beginning formal education.

Each first grader is presented with a beautiful rose by an older student, symbolising the unfolding of their individual educational journey and the blossoming of their potential. Parents are integral to this ceremony, offering encouragement and support as they entrust their children to the School's care.

It's a moment of shared emotion, courage and gratitude for the path ahead. Through song, symbolism and the warmth of community, we celebrate these young children as they cross the threshold into their elementary years, ready to embark on a wondrous journey of learning and self-discovery.

Festival of Abundance and Inner Strength

Inspired by the archetype of Michael, this September festival celebrates courage, inner strength and the bountiful harvest of our land. We gather as a community to share a communal meal, giving thanks for the provisions and the gifts of nature. We engage in narratives that inspire bravery, resilience and the triumph of light over darkness, and symbolically overcome "dragons" – activities that embody meeting challenges with inner resolve and moral courage, fostering a sense of empowerment in each individual.

November and December – A Time of Light and Reflection

As the calm trade winds arrive and the skies clear, we honour the Earth's quiet in-breath and kindle the light within. These festivals are a time for deep reflection, nurturing our inner resilience and celebrating the power of kindness.

Martinmas

Martinmas and the Lantern Walk hold deep significance in Waldorf schools, embodying themes of inner light, compassion and courage during the darkening autumn days. Martinmas, celebrated on November 11th, honours St. Martin of Tours, a Roman soldier who famously shared his cloak with a beggar. This act of selfless giving becomes a central teaching moment, encouraging children to reflect on their own capacity for kindness and generosity towards others. The story of St. Martin reminds us that even in times of increasing darkness and cold, we can bring warmth and light into the world through our actions.

The Lantern Walk

The Lantern Walk, held around Martinmas, is a beautiful and moving ritual that visually represents this inner light. Children craft their own lanterns, which they then carry in a silent procession as dusk settles. Walking a path or simply moving together in the dim light, each child's lantern casts a gentle glow, symbolising the individual light they carry within themselves. This collective journey in the darkness fosters a sense of community and shared purpose. The light from their lanterns serves as a reminder that even small acts of goodness can illuminate the path for others and brighten the longest nights. It's a contemplative experience that invites children and adults alike to connect with a sense of peace, reflection and the quiet strength of their inner spirit.

The Advent Spiral

While our loved ones in colder climates remain wrapped in winter's long nights, awaiting the sun's return, our children embark on a profoundly meaningful journey: the Advent Spiral. Each child walks a spiral path of evergreen boughs leading to a central candle. This single light represents the cosmic, divine light that guides us through darkness. With an unlit candle in hand, the child walks towards the centre, lights it from the central flame and then places it carefully along the spiral on their outward journey.

This silent, meditative walk symbolises the individual's inner journey through darkness towards their own inner light. It's a time for quiet introspection, for cultivating courage and for finding strength within. As each child places their candle, a growing radiance emerges, transforming the once-dark spiral into a path of light. This beautifully illustrates how individual efforts to cultivate inner light contribute to a greater, collective warmth and hope that reaches the farthest corners of the world. It's a powerful metaphor for bringing warmth and consciousness into the world.

May – The Time of Joy and Vitality

The May Festival

The May Festival in Waldorf schools is a joyous celebration of spring, vitality and community, typically observed around May 1st. It symbolises the triumph of light and warmth over the departing colder months and the awakening of nature's full bloom. Children, teachers and often parents participate in festivities that embody the spirit of renewal and growth.

A central element of the May Festival is the Maypole dance. This ancient tradition, deeply rooted in European folk customs, involves children weaving colourful ribbons around a tall pole. The intricate patterns created by their movements symbolise the interwovenness of life, community bonds and the harmonious cycles of nature. The Maypole dance not only encourages cooperation and grace but also connects children to a sense of shared human history and the rhythmic beauty of the seasons. It's a vibrant expression of youthful energy and a collective welcome to summer's promise.

June – The Summer Solstice and St. John's Festival

St. John's Festival

The St. John's Festival, celebrated in Waldorf schools around the summer solstice, is a vibrant and joyous occasion that embraces the peak of summer and the longest day of the year. It's a time for warmth, light and community, marked by outdoor activities that deeply connect children with the flourishing natural world. This festival celebrates the life and teachings of St. John the Baptist, whose message of renewal and preparation for new beginnings resonates profoundly with the Waldorf ethos. It encourages both inner reflection and outer engagement, inviting children to appreciate nature's abundance and cultivate qualities such as courage, generosity and their own inner light.

A central element of the St. John's Festival is the building and lighting of a large bonfire. This tradition powerfully symbolises the sun's strength at its zenith and serves as a vibrant reminder of inner warmth and courage. Children might participate in joyful games, storytelling and crafting beautiful flower wreaths, further connecting them to the exuberance of summer. The festival provides a meaningful opportunity to reflect on the dynamic balance between light and darkness, both externally, in the changing seasons, and internally, within each individual.

As the natural world flourishes, this celebration fosters a sense of resilience, inner radiance and joy, marking a communal farewell before the summer break and a hopeful anticipation of reuniting in September for another exciting school-year journey.

Celebrating Birthdays

A child's birthday is a time of hope, a time of looking forward to a new year filled with fresh milestones and experiences. Celebrating another trip around the sun for a child is an opportunity for reflection and to bring beauty, meaning and a smattering of magic into their lives.

In Waldorf tradition, birthdays are always a cause for celebration, as traditions and rituals help ground children and allow them to experience the rhythms of a year. Celebrating a birthday in the Waldorf way provides an opportunity not only to mark this special day but to honour the child's place in your family and their world.

Your child's teacher will reach out to you before their birthday to invite you and your family to join in the celebration.

13. Arrival and Collection

Children are welcomed at the door each morning, and we ask that they arrive in time to begin the day calmly with their class.

Who may collect your child?

When your child joins us, you tell us who may collect them, and we keep that list current. We will not release a child to an adult who is not on it.

If someone different needs to collect your child, please let the office know in advance – by email or by telephone to the School number – and ask them to bring photo identification. We would always rather make an awkward telephone call than let a child leave with the wrong adult.

Please tell us straight away if anything changes: your contact details, who may collect your child, a medical need or a court order affecting contact. If a child has not been collected at the end of the day, we care for them at School and contact you and your emergency contacts.

During drop-off and pick-up, our first priority is to welcome each child and help them begin or end the day with ease. We warmly ask that longer conversations take place after pick-up, once the children have left for the day.

14. Attendance and Absence

We have created a welcoming environment where children feel excited to come to school each day. To support this upbeat rhythm, we encourage regular attendance. However, we understand there will be times when your child cannot attend. In such cases, please let the School know as soon as possible.

You may email or text the School number to inform us of your child's absence. The earlier we are aware, the smoother the transition can be for the class as a whole.

15. Healthy Rhythms and Sleep

Children are carried by the rhythms of their world – from the breath in their bodies to the daily cycle of sleeping and waking. The turning of the seasons and the rhythmic procession of stars across the heavens are all part of a child's experience, felt deeply and instinctively.

In Waldorf education, we understand that children flourish when their daily activities reflect the natural order of life: balanced, predictable and lovingly held within rhythm.

Just as the rhythm of the school day offers stability and nourishment, so too does a consistent routine at home. Whilst we understand the challenges of modern life, we gently encourage families to establish regular mealtimes and bedtimes.

Young children need an early supper and a consistent bedtime. We gently recommend that bedtime be as early as 7:00 pm, and no later than 8:00 pm, to support healthy growth and restorative sleep.

This rhythm supports their development, behaviour, immune system and sense of security. A well-rested child is more joyful, resilient and open to learning.



16. Health and Wellbeing

At Marinela, we understand health to be far more than the absence of illness. True wellbeing encompasses a child's physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. We honour the body's natural rhythms and recognise that illness is not a failure, but an invitation to rest, restore and receive care.

If your child begins to feel unwell during school hours, we will find a quiet, resting place for them and contact you to arrange for you to collect them from School.

If your child is feeling unwell, showing signs of fever, fatigue, cough or a runny nose, or simply seems low in energy, we kindly ask that they remain at home. Recovery is often deepest when a child can rest in the comfort and warmth of their familiar environment, supported by a parent's loving presence.

We recommend that children return to school no sooner than 24 hours after their symptoms have passed, and only when they feel fully well and energised. We make this request not only to care for your child's health, but also to protect the group's rhythm, so that every child feels calm, safe and whole in the classroom.

Medical information, allergies and medication

Before your child starts, please complete our **Emergency Contact and Medical Information Form** and tell us about any allergies, medical conditions, dietary needs or immunisations your child has received. Please keep this information current throughout the year – it is the first thing we reach for in an emergency, and with a farm, a workshop and a pond on our campus, a doctor may need to know your child's tetanus status within minutes.

If your child needs medication during the school day, please speak to us in advance. Medication is given only with your written consent, is stored safely, and every dose is recorded and shared with you.

Our staff are trained in first aid. If a child is injured or becomes seriously unwell, we care for them, contact you immediately and where necessary seek medical attention without delay.

17. Sun, Water and the Pool

Sun and Skin

Protecting children from the Barbadian sun comes first, so we ask that you:

- apply sunscreen at home before school;
- send a labelled bottle in your child's bag;
- send a sun hat every day.

We shade our outdoor spaces and time activities away from the strongest sun. If you would like staff to reapply sunscreen during the day, please tell us on your child's medical form, and we will record your preference. Where a child needs sun protection, we will provide it and tell you what we have used.

Learning to Swim

Older children have the wonderful opportunity to learn to swim during their school hours. Swimming builds gross motor skills and gives a child a skill for life. Living in Barbados, your child can jump off boats, swim with turtles and even snorkel.

Water and Supervision

Water requires a higher level of care than anything else we do. Whenever children are in or near the pool or the pond:

- One adult's only task is watching the water – they do not teach, lead an activity or supervise another group at the same time;
- If that adult has to step away, the children come away from the water until another adult has formally taken over;
- Staffing follows the School's Operational Staff-to-Child Ratio Schedule and the risk assessment for the activity;
- Swimming teachers and coaches from outside the School are vetted, and are never alone with a child.

The pool is fenced, and we practise walking calmly around it with the children until it becomes second nature.

18. Keeping Children Safe

Nothing matters more to us than the safety of the children in our care.

Every adult who works at Marinela is vetted before unsupervised contact with children begins, is trained in safeguarding and knows what to do if they are worried about a child. Our full **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy** is given to every family when your child joins us, and you are welcome to ask for a copy at any time.

If you are worried about a child – your own child, or another child at School – please tell us. You do not need to be certain, and you do not need proof. Looking into it is our work, not yours.

How to raise a concern

1. For an ordinary school concern – something about your child's day, their learning, a friendship, a worry that has been building – please speak to your child's class teacher. Most things are resolved here, and quickly.

2. If your concern relates to a child's safety or welfare, contact our **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** or the **Deputy DSL** directly, the same day. Please do not wait, and please do not feel that you must raise it with the class teacher first.

3. If your concern is about an adult – a member of staff, a visiting teacher, a coach or anyone else at School – contact the **Principal / CEO**. If your concern is about the Principal / CEO, contact the **Founder / Director**. If your concern is about the Founder / Director, contact the **DSL**, who will follow the School's safeguarding reporting procedure and, where the statutory reporting threshold is met, report directly to the Child Care Board.

4. If you are still concerned, you may use the School's complaints procedure.

The names and contact details of the people in these roles are on our Safeguarding Contacts sheet, which is displayed at School, sent to all families at the start of each school year and available from the office at any time.

You may also contact the Child Care Board or the Police directly, at any time. You do not need to raise it with us first, and we would never treat it as a hostile act. If a child is in immediate danger, please contact the emergency services first.

Two things we would like you to know

1. A member of staff cannot promise a child – or a parent / caregiver – that a worry about a child's safety will be kept secret. If a child's safety is at stake, we must pass it on to the person whose job it is to help.
2. Where the law requires us to file a report, we will do so. No one – not a parent, not a teacher, not the School's leadership – can prevent a report that the law requires.

Visitors and other adults on our site

Our School is located on a private family property, with a farm, a pond, gardens and sports areas, so adults who are not teachers are sometimes nearby. Every adult who is not a member of staff and who will be where children are is either accompanied by a member of staff or has been vetted and authorised in writing. No unvetted adult is ever alone with a child, anywhere on the property, at any time. Visitors sign in on arrival.

19. Our Approach to Discipline

With Love, Clarity and Trust

Our school does not use punishments or pressure as a means of discipline. We believe true motivation arises from within – the child's natural desire for goodness, harmony and belonging.

We offer clear, consistent and loving boundaries that do not restrict, but hold, like an embrace. Boundaries help create a sense of safety and order, allowing the child to grow into themselves confidently.

We stay close when a child is angry, withdrawn or overwhelmed. Not to scold or correct, but to listen, understand and offer presence. We believe that every behaviour expresses something meaningful, and that behind each action lies an unmet need seeking understanding and support.

Discipline at Marinela is not about control. It is about guidance.

We walk alongside the child, gently helping them become the master of their own will, feelings and actions – through warmth, quiet reflection, rhythm and trust. We strive to cultivate individuals who can act from inner freedom, grounded in empathy, self-awareness and a profound connection to the world around them.

What we will never do

We do not use corporal punishment of any kind, and we never shame, humiliate, frighten or intimidate a child. This applies to every adult at Marinela, without exception.

Clear boundaries are not the opposite of warmth – they are part of it, and we hold them consistently and kindly.

Very occasionally an adult may need to step in physically to stop a child from hurting themselves or someone else. We use the minimum intervention necessary, record what happened, report it to the Designated Safeguarding Lead the same day, and inform the child's parent or caregiver in accordance with the School's safeguarding and incident procedures.

When something happens during the day

If something happens during the school day – a fall, a bump, a disagreement between children, an upset that needed our help – we record it in an **Incident Report** and let you know the same day. Working together as a team brings out the best in every child. For recurring concerns, we will arrange a conversation with the Lead Teacher, by email or in person.

A concern about a **child's safety or welfare** is different. It is handled under our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy rather than as an ordinary incident. Wherever appropriate, we will keep you informed and involved. There are, however, circumstances in which our safeguarding procedures or the law require us to seek advice or make a report before contacting a parent or caregiver – for example, where speaking to a parent first could place a child at risk or interfere with an investigation. This is never a judgement about your family, and it is a standard that every school which takes child protection seriously must hold.

Working together

We also take observational notes to help develop a thoughtful, responsive plan of action, and the Lead Teacher may offer guidance to families on supportive strategies at home. Within our school community, we are fortunate to have professionals with a deep understanding of child development whose expertise helps us integrate approaches aligned with Waldorf principles. We would always discuss this with you first, and we do not share information about your child with anyone outside the School without your agreement, unless a child's safety requires it.

We know that children thrive when there is harmony and consistency between school and home.

20. Cleanliness and Care for Our Space

At Marinela, our classrooms, studios, kitchens and bathrooms are not merely functional areas but living spaces. They absorb scent, sound, touch and mood. The atmosphere we create in these spaces nourishes the children's senses and inner experience.

That's why we use only natural, non-toxic and environmentally friendly cleaning products – free from harsh chemicals and synthetic fragrances, and safe for children's skin, breath and overall wellbeing, and for the environment.

We choose:

- Plant-based, biodegradable cleaning solutions.
- Essential oils in place of artificial scents.
- Natural materials, including soap, vinegar, baking soda and citrus, for gentle, effective cleaning.

These practices not only support the children's health but also instil a deep respect for their environment – and for the Earth, of which they are part.

We teach children that cleanliness is not about sterility, but about care, beauty and presence.



21. Health, Immunisation and Family Choice

Marinela respects each family's individual healthcare choices. The School does not provide medical advice and does not take a position on individual immunisation decisions.

Where applicable, the School follows the public-health requirements of Barbados.

22. Connection with Nature

At Marinela, nature is not a backdrop – it is a living teacher, a comforter, an inspiration and a home.

Each day, children venture beyond the classroom – into the garden, by the pond, through the fruit park, to the farm, under the trees. They feel the wind, watch clouds shift, listen to birdsong, feed the animals, plant seeds and witness all life passing through cycles of birth, growth and rest.

We do not simply teach about nature – we invite children to experience it firsthand. To feel moist soil in their hands, to smell the grass after rain, to hear the rustle of leaves beneath their feet, to bask in the morning light shining through banana leaves.

We don't teach ecology. We teach relationships. A child who grows up close to the living world will not destroy it; they will protect it.

Children are never at the pond without a member of staff whose task is watching the water. Time with the animals is always supervised, and we wash our hands afterwards.

And most importantly, nature returns children to their inner stillness, where emotions, thoughts, dreams and true selfhood are born.

23. Use of Privately Shared Spaces on School Grounds

We are deeply grateful that our school lives in a vibrant, inspiring environment that breathes with natural beauty and quiet generosity. Beyond the main school building, the children are welcomed into several magical spaces on family-owned, privately held land that has been lovingly and graciously made available to Marinela.

These include:

- A working farm with animals,
- A tennis court nestled under the sky,
- A tropical park with winding paths and a peaceful pond,
- And a fruit garden where trees bear fruit year-round.

These spaces are a blessing – a gesture of trust – and we teach the children to approach them with reverence and joy.

Our Guiding Principles for the Land

We gently uphold a set of guiding principles to help children build reverence and responsibility for the land:

- Children visit our outdoor areas only in the company of a member of School staff or another vetted and authorised adult.
- After each visit, we restore the space to its natural order, leaving it tidy, cared for and whole.
- We treat trees, plants, animals and built structures with kindness, gentleness and care.
- In the fruit garden, we regularly invite children to observe the trees, notice the ripening fruit, and, when the time is right, harvest small amounts with care. We guide each group to harvest from just one or two trees of each variety, helping them use the garden with balance, respect and care for its long-term sustainability.

During the school day, every adult on site – including parents – signs in at the office.

This land remains the private property of the founding family, who have generously opened it to the Marinela children as a living gift. We'd like to ask families to refrain from entering the grounds outside of school hours or activities unless they have received prior permission from the owners.

We thank all parents and teachers for nurturing a spirit of reverence, gratitude and mindful stewardship in the children, as they care for what the founding family has so thoughtfully entrusted to us.

24. Screen Policy

Childhood Without Digital Noise

At Marinela, we believe in the power of living experience.

We believe in eyes that gaze at the clouds, not at screens. In ears that listen to the rustling of palms, not cartoons. In hands that mould beeswax and pick mangoes, not swipe and scroll.

We know that screens are part of the modern world – but we are also increasingly aware of what they can take from young children: imagination, presence, sleep, attention, patience, language and connection.

As much as possible, we encourage families to limit screen exposure, especially in the early years, when the senses are still forming, and the child's inner world is still soft and impressionable.

Why does this matter?

Guidance from paediatric bodies, including the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and a growing body of research suggest that early and frequent screen use may be associated with:

- Slower language development.
- Reduced attention span.
- Disrupted sleep rhythms.
- Difficulties with emotional regulation.
- Less imaginative and less sustained play.
- Greater dependency and overstimulation.
- Fewer moments of boredom, observation, creativity and inner silence – the birthplace of individuality.

We gently but firmly encourage families to avoid screen exposure at home, especially:

- In the morning, before school.
- In the evening, before bedtime.
- On weekends, when a child can live a whole, present-day life.

Instead, read stories, paint, cook, listen to music, play outside, lie in the grass, look at the sky and the stars. Do things with your child that connect the senses, the body, the breath and the heart. These are the moments that build not only the brain but the soul.

25. Photography and Media

At Marinela Holistic Education, we treat photography with the same care we bring to all things – gently, respectfully and attuned to the moment.

We don't take photos to capture. We photograph to share a glimpse of your child's inner world – their focus, play, work and inspiration. These moments are shared privately with families through our secure Transparent Classroom platform. If you do not yet have access, please let us know – we'll help you connect. We want you to feel close, even when you're far away.

Your choice, recorded

When your child joins us, and again at the beginning of each school year, you complete our **Photo and Media Consent Form**. On it you choose, separately, whether images of your child may be used:

- privately with your own family, through Transparent Classroom;
- within School and in printed materials;
- on the School's website and social media.

You may say yes to some and no to others, change your mind at any time or decline entirely – without explanation, and with no consequence at all for your child.

- We use images only in the ways you have authorised.
- We never publish a child's name alongside their image unless you have separately agreed to it.
- Photographs of children are taken only on School devices, never on personal phones or cameras.
- We never use your child's image as "content".
- At festivals and Little Seeds sessions, you are warmly welcome to photograph your own child. Please do not photograph or record another child unless that child's parent or caregiver has expressly agreed, and please do not publish or share images containing other children without their parent's or caregiver's permission.

We approach photography with the same reverence we bring to every aspect of the child's experience. We use it thoughtfully, sparingly and always to foster connection.

26. Clothing

At Marinela, we ask parents to choose clothing that is soft, comfortable and harmonious with the school's atmosphere.

Please dress your child in clothes that allow for unrestricted movement, feature simple designs and are made from natural or nature-inspired materials.

- Please avoid bright prints, cartoon characters, logos or glitter.
- Choose calm, earthy tones that create a gentle, grounded atmosphere.
- Natural fabrics, such as linen, cotton and wool, are encouraged.
- Shoes should be quiet, comfortable and well-suited to movement – not for show, but for play.
- Always include a complete change of clothes in your child's backpack, and a swimsuit and towel on swimming days.



27. What to Bring to School

Children at Marinela are immersed in rich sensory experiences throughout the day – from cooking, painting and water play to gardening and caring for animals. As a result, their clothing may occasionally become wet or soiled. To help your child stay comfortable and supported, we ask that they arrive each day with a small backpack containing the following items:

- A complete change of clothes.
- Nappies and wipes, if your child is not yet toileting independently.
- A swimsuit and towel on swimming days.
- A sun hat for outdoor protection.
- Sunscreen, labelled with your child's name.
- Practical shoes that allow for confident, unrestricted movement.
- Boots to be used on farm days.

Please ensure all personal items are clearly labelled so they can be easily identified and returned if misplaced. These belongings will remain at school, and we'll let you know when anything needs to be replenished.

Lunch and snacks are lovingly prepared and provided each day. For this reason, we kindly ask that no food be brought from home. Similarly, toys should remain at home unless you have discussed and agreed otherwise with your child's teacher.

By preparing a few simple items, you help your child start their day feeling ready, comfortable and free to play, explore and engage with ease.



28. The Documents Behind This Handbook

This Handbook explains how we live and work together. A small number of other documents sit behind it, and you will receive them when your child joins us:

- **Welcome Letter and Offer of Place** – formal confirmation of your child's place at Marinela.
- **Enrolment Contract** – to be reviewed, signed and returned by a parent or legal guardian.
- **Enrolment Invoice** – containing the Registration Fee and the Deposit.
- **School Calendar** – term dates, holidays, school events and closures.
- **Emergency Contact and Medical Information Form** – how we reach you, and what we need to know about your child's health.
- **Photo and Media Consent Form** – your choices about images of your child.
- **Accident Waiver and Release of Liability Form** – to be reviewed and signed by a parent or legal guardian.

You will also receive, separately from the Welcome and Enrolment Pack:

- **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy** – our full child protection rules.
- **Safeguarding Contacts sheet** – the current names and contact details for safeguarding, reissued each school year.
- **Fees schedule and Complaints procedure** – both available from the office at any time.

Where anything in this Family Handbook differs from the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, the **Safeguarding Policy applies**. If anything here is unclear, please ask us. We would always rather have the conversation.



29. Gratitude and Closing

Let us grow light together

Thank you for walking this path with us. Thank you for your trust, warmth and openness, and for choosing to embark on this rare, living journey.

Marinela Holistic Education is not just a school. It is a field of education, a place where souls meet: children, parents, teachers, nature and time.

It is a space we co-create together, something delicate, essential and true. We tend it with gentleness and care, in rhythm with the heart.

We believe no family arrives at Marinela by chance. Each one brings something unique: a voice, a light, a rhythm, an idea, a gesture of love.

You are part of this breath. You are part of a new story of education, one that makes space for spirit, beauty, play, depth and freedom.

Thank you for choosing Marinela. Welcome to our world.

A world where not only children grow, but we do too.



MARINELA
HOLISTIC EDUCATION
BARBADOS

*A Waldorf-Inspired Private School in Barbados.
Rooted in Beauty and Balance.*

 MarinelaEducation.com

 info@MarinelaEducation.com

 [MarinelaEducation](https://www.instagram.com/MarinelaEducation)