



## **PARENT HELPERS AND VOLUNTEERS POLICY**

### **RATIONALE**

Today it is generally accepted that when parents express confidence in the school and are involved in some way, their children are likely to be happier and perform better in the classroom. When young children view their parents and staff sharing common beliefs, attitudes and goals, they therefore feel more secure and more purposeful. Research from the Australian Government Family School Partnerships Framework in 2008 indicates that effective schools have high level of parental and community involvement. This involvement is strongly related to improved student learning, attendance and behaviour. Family involvement can have a major impact on student learning, regardless of the social or cultural background of the family. Family school partnerships are collaborative relationships and activities involving school staff, parents and other family members of students at the school. Effective partnerships are based on mutual trust and respect, and shared responsibility for the faith development and education of the children. This underlines the importance of the need for parents and staff to work together.

### **AIM**

#### **CLOSE LINKS: HOME - SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS**

At St. Paul's Catholic Parish Primary School, we aim to maintain very close links with parents. Once forged, these links have been found to result in:

- greater understanding by parents of their children's schooling;
- greater understanding by staff of the children and their needs;
- better communication between home and school;
- greater understanding of the shared responsibility of faith and education
- fewer crises and misunderstandings;
- higher student morale and confidence;
- more goodwill and mutual esteem between parents and staff; and
- a happier school.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

To assist parent helpers and volunteers some important information is detailed below which will help with the implementation of this valuable work at the school.

### **PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

Parent involvement in the school is an activity that we encourage at St. Paul's. The partnership of parents and staff is vital to the achievement of the school's Vision and Mission. One of the primary roles of the Catholic school is to support parents in the formation of their children's faith. The Catholic Schools at a Crossroads pastoral letter reminds us all that, 'Evangelising, forming and otherwise educating our next generation is not the task of our schools alone: it requires a common effort from all our families, parishes and agencies. Nevertheless we look to those involved in our schools to ensure that their very significant resources achieve, as far as possible, what the Catholic community rightly expects: young men and women of character and faith whose individual gifts are nurtured to their highest potential so that they can contribute effectively to Church, society and culture.'

Some additional ways parents are involved in the life of the school:

- Parents and Friends Association, which builds our educational community and provides so many resources for the students and the school,
- Adult assistance in the classroom, Library and on excursions,
- School Fete, Spring Ball and fundraising activities
- School Tuckshop, Mother's and Father's Day stalls,
- Working Bees and the Pastoral Care Committee,
- Bundanoon and School Walkathon,
- Complementing and supporting each other, encouraging the development of the whole child,
- Communication with their child's teacher and
- Implementing all the school policies and rules.

The school appreciates the extra personal involvement of parents. This extra assistance ultimately helps the students of the school and the school is very grateful for the time parents give in supporting the school.

### **GUIDELINES FOR PARENT HELPERS & VOLUNTEERS**

The classroom teacher is responsible for the education, control and behaviour management of the children. The parent or volunteer is a helper, working under the direction and guidance of the teacher. Teachers are entrusted with the development of the whole class of children, and have the long term good of each child at heart. We ask that parent or volunteer helpers also provide for all the children, supporting equal opportunities and confidentiality for each child.

The teacher, as the caring professional and facilitator of the learning, will at all times provide the guidance needed for classroom helpers. If there is any part of the program that helpers are not clear about please discuss it with the teacher. The school expects parents and volunteers to respect the teacher's expertise and maintain a professional attitude as they work alongside the teacher. The school stresses the importance of being professional and insists that parents and volunteers do not discuss classroom events and "children" outside the class or school. Parent or volunteers helpers are in a privileged position and are reminded that if there are any concerns about what is happening in the classroom, or with a child's learning then the parent helper or volunteer must talk **ONLY** to the teacher. It is not appropriate to talk to the parent of the child or other parents about a child's learning. Confidentiality is a requirement of anyone who helps at the school. Failure to maintain a professional confidential attitude can cause a great deal of worry and upset for all concerned. Remember it is the teacher's role to talk to parents about a child's progress.

The offer of assistance to help in the classroom is decided by each class teacher. It is not a given

that parents will help in the classroom, however when and where possible parent assistance is encouraged. Parent or volunteer helpers in the classroom provide the teachers with a wonderful opportunity to demystify the process of school and children will benefit greatly from the involvement of their parents in classroom activities. Reading is a valuable and vital life skill that parents can complete at home with their child. Helping with reading at school is one example of how helping can improve parent's confidence with the reading process, help children learn to read and achieve the aims of this policy.

## **COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS**

At St Paul's School we are committed to providing a safe and supportive work and learning environment for all Staff and Students. We acknowledge that staff members, students and parents can sometimes feel aggrieved about something that is happening at the school. A Staff member, student, parent or community member may have a complaint about any decision, behaviour or omission that they feel is unreasonable. Sometimes the aggrieved person can address the issue by raising the complaint directly with the person involved with the issue. However that is not always possible, and some complaints, because of the seriousness of their nature, should be referred immediately to the Principal, eg complaints about behaviour which places others at risk of serious harm. Parents are ill advised to approach the children of other families and other parents with a school related complaint. This is often a sensitive area and in order to protect all the parties it is advisable to work through the relevant teacher or member of the school leadership. The same needs to be stated for parent helpers and volunteers. We welcome the concerns of people at the school, parish and local community, so if there is any matter of concern please refer the concern to the class teacher or school leadership first, and don't rely on gossip or rumours or other people's views on matters. Before any matter gets out of hand, speak to the class teacher or a member of the school leadership. This will save everyone a lot of time, worry and trouble.

The school wants to build partnerships with parents, families and the local community. A strong relationship between home and school has a significant impact on the education of the students. The following of the above procedures will assist to grow the partnership between home and school even further.

## **SCHOOL DOCUMENTS**

The School and the Diocesan system of schools has in place policies to support parents and volunteers. These policies are, Behaviour Management, Relationship Management, Complaints Handling, Maintaining Right Relationships, God's Places, Professional Conduct and Child Protection, and Child Protection Code of Professional Standards for Catholic School Employees. These policies support events that, on the most part, relate to the students and dealing with issues between the home and school, students and teachers. In recent years however, policies have been written which include processes and conduct that is expected by parents as well. The two policies that deal specifically with this area are, Maintaining Right Relationships and Complaints Handling. These two policies are available on the school website.

The school has a set of values that are part of the Vision and Mission statement and all people who come to the school are expected to adhere to these. That means teachers, students and parents are expected to abide by our school values. The core values of the school emanate from St. Paul's letter to the Corinthians and the core values of, FAITH – HOPE – LOVE, are actioned through, Respect, Honesty, Responsibility, Resilience, Justice, Encouragement, Compassion, Cooperation, Optimism, Excellence and Belonging. This aspect of enrolment and the partnership with the school is a commitment that all families and parents make when an enrolment place is accepted at the school. It is not just the school that must live this, it is a responsibility that the school and the home share together.

## **CHILD PROTECTION**

To help ensure the safety and welfare of all students, the school applies the current processes in NSW for Working With Children. All volunteers who will assist in the school will be required to sign a Declaration about them not being barred from working with children or convicted of certain serious criminal offences. All visitors, volunteers and class helpers must wear the Visitor/Volunteer Tag and sign in and out at the office. If a volunteer wishes to assist in the classroom they must complete a parent induction session with the class teacher before commencing duties.

## **HOW PARENTS CAN MAKE A GOOD SCHOOL BETTER**

Make an effort to understand what the school is trying to do. Support the school's Vision and Mission.

If at all possible, participate on committees and in discussion groups that consider educational issues and give opinions to the staff.

See the school as **YOUR** school. Encourage your children to see it in the same way.

By all means offer constructive criticism and suggestions and direct your information to the right people at the right time and in the right place.

You are always welcome to attend school activities - assemblies, open days, plays, concerts, picnics, sporting functions, celebrations. Bring a friend or friends!

Join the official parent group, (Parents & Friends Association) and look after the school's interests.

Welcome new parents. Help them feel that they belong. Build their confidence in the school.

Support a broad and balanced curriculum. Resist attempts by any pressure groups to narrow the curriculum to things that are purely functional and measurable.

Encourage your children to co-operate fully, to join in all school activities and to take a pride in the buildings, the grounds and the school community as a whole.

Let the Principal and the staff know that you support them, even if sometimes you have to be a friendly critic or a critical friend.

Please don't forget to let us know how the home school partnership is going!

This policy was updated in 2013 and will be reviewed in 2017.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

- God's Places
- School Vision and Mission statement
- Catholic Schools at a Crossroads
- Working with Children Employer Guidelines 2006
- Australian Government Family – School Partnerships Framework 2008
- Behaviour Management
- Relationship Management
- Professional Conduct and Child Protection
- Complaints Handling
- Maintaining Right Relationships
- Child Protection Code of Professional Standards for Catholic Employees

## **APPENDIX**

### **1. Volunteers Code of Conduct**



## **VOLUNTEERS CODE OF CONDUCT**

### **RATIONALE**

This Code does not attempt to provide a detailed and exhaustive list of what to do in every aspect of your work. Instead, it represents a broad framework that will provide an appropriate course of action when you are volunteering in the school. While the School Principal is ultimately responsible for decisions and outcomes of the school, the reality is that good outcomes are achieved when volunteers exercise sound judgment in fulfilling duties while in the School.

The Code places an obligation on all volunteers to take responsibility for their own conduct and work with, fellow volunteers, the Parents and Friends Association, School staff and the Principal cooperatively, so as to establish a school where people are happy, feel valued, respected, supported to achieve the best possible educational outcomes for the students.

### **AIMS**

The aim of this Code is to establish a common understanding of the standards of behaviour expected of all volunteers and visitors to the school.

### **IMPLEMENTATION**

As a volunteer at St. Paul's Catholic Primary School I will abide by and demonstrate the following code of conduct

- be honest, trustworthy and accountable
- be courteous and responsive in dealing with others
- oppose prejudice, injustice and dishonesty
- be fair to people and avoid discrimination
- avoid behaviour which is, or might reasonably be perceived as, harassing, bullying or intimidating
- maintain a professional relationships with, students, parents, volunteers and staff
- behave in ways that promote dignity, respect and a positive school environment
- be mindful of your duty to the safety of yourself and others while at the school and comply with the Occupational Health and Safety and hygiene requirements of the School
- support the decisions made by the school and Parents and Friends association
- utilize the school complaints handling policy when needed
- complete and comply with Child Protection legislation requirements
- offer feedback and suggestions through the appropriate channels in a civil manner
- seek assistance from school staff when concerned with student behaviour or academic progress.