



Parents, Visitor and Volunteers Policy

Introduction

St Columba's Primary School actively values and encourages Parents, Volunteers and Visitors to visit the school and seeks to provide a safe, respectful, open and friendly learning environment for all students and staff. To achieve this, St Columba's has developed guidelines to effectively inform, monitor and manage the way Parents, Volunteers and Visitors interact with teachers and other members of the school community that must be applied at all times.

Rationale

The purpose of this policy is to set out the standards of behaviour expected of those who visit St Columba's and to detail the necessary procedures that will help resolve issues as soon as possible so that a safe and harmonious school environment is maintained.

Scope and Application

This policy applies to all Parents (including Carers and Guardians). It also applies to people performing work on behalf of the School such as volunteers, contractors, emergency teachers and visitors. The policy also applies to interactions with staff.

The policy is intended to apply to circumstances where Parents, Volunteers and Visitors are attending the School and communicating (i.e. speaking, phone call and emailing) with the staff both during and outside School hours. Such circumstances include but are not limited to: School masses, School-related functions, events, camps, excursions, sporting carnivals, and any circumstance where an individual is representing the School.

Policy Statement

Parents, Volunteers, Visitors, Contractors and other members of the School community will:

- behave in a manner that supports the School's values and treat people with respect, dignity and courtesy;
- behave in a professional manner; do not discriminate, harass, bully (including intimidation), act or threaten to act violently towards staff, students, associates and other members of the School community;
- comply with the School's *Code of Conduct* document;
- raise grievances in an appropriate manner with the School as outlined in School Grievance Policy; and
- comply with relevant legislation and guidelines (outlined later in this policy) issued by the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria.

NOTE: All Parents, Volunteers and Visitors are required to use courteous and acceptable language in all communications with students, staff, other parents and members of the broader School community. The use of profane, insulting, harassing, aggressive or otherwise offensive language or body language will not be tolerated. Parents, Volunteers and Visitors who fail to treat other members of the school community with consideration and respect will be asked to remove themselves from the School site.

Before and After School

Parents, Volunteers and Visitors will:

- strive to ensure their child/children are punctual to school everyday in accordance with the Department of Education and Training Guidelines for Attendance updated January 2018 ;
- vacate the School grounds once classes commence;
- sign in for a visitor's pass from the office if assisting in class activities;
- direct their child to the play area monitored by duty teacher as students are under the supervision of staff if waiting in the school grounds until classes commence;
- monitor all pre-school children who must stay with the accompanying adult at all times;
- allow staff to supervise, investigate and manage students without interference; and
- discuss issues or concerns about the School, staff, other parents or students through the correct School procedures.

Confidential and Sensitive Information

St Columba's supports and upholds the confidentiality of staff and students. From time to time, Parents, Volunteers and Visitors, when attending School may become privy to sensitive or confidential information through the course of their activities (such as volunteering) or otherwise.

Parents, Volunteers and Visitors are reminded that sensitive or confidential information obtained through the course of their activities is to remain strictly confidential and its dissemination to anybody, other than classroom teachers or the Principal may result in action being taken by the School.

Staff should not be approached regarding a sensitive or confidential issue with other people present so as to maintain confidentiality.

Contacting Teachers

Parents (including Carers and Guardians) are encouraged where appropriate, to meet with their child's teacher. If there are any ongoing major issues or concerns these are encouraged to be taken up with the Deputy Principal and then the Principal.

Parents (including Carers and Guardians) may periodically need to approach the School in order to:

- discuss the progress, engagement or well-being of their child;
- discuss actions of other students;
- enquire about School policies and practices;
- engage with in-School/excursion activities e.g. class/year groups.
- assist with English/Mathematics, P.E. and other curriculum areas, following an invitation/enquiry for assistance from staff;
- convey information about change of address, custody details, health issues etc.;
- express concern about actions of staff.

On such occasions, Parents (including Carers and Guardians) are requested to arrange a mutually convenient appointment to meet with staff. Please note, it may not be possible for staff to respond immediately to phone calls or emails particularly out of hours or during teaching times (8:45am–3:45pm). The classroom teacher will endeavour to return phone calls or emails as soon as possible. However, please allow up to two business days for a reply regarding matters that are important but non-urgent.

Confidential or sensitive conversations should always occur after making an appointment with the appropriate classroom teacher to discuss in person. Email discussions of such matters should be avoided. Staff should not be approached regarding an issue with other parents or students present.

NOTE: That any matters subject to the Grievance Policy should be pursued in accordance with the requirements of that policy.

Staff Safety and Wellbeing

The safety and wellbeing of staff is both a legal and ethical requirement of the School. Behaviour that compromises the safety and professional wellbeing of staff will not be tolerated.

The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria issued its 'Safe and Sound Practice Guidelines' for School Principals in 2014. The Guidelines offer advice and support to school principals in both preventing and responding to incidents of aggressive, potentially violent and/or violent behaviour directed towards staff. The Guidelines recommend, as part of a policy (Code of Conduct), that:

The School places high value and priority on maintaining a safe and respectful working environment for our staff. We regard certain behaviours as harmful and unacceptable in so far as they compromise the safety and professional wellbeing of our staff. These behaviours include, but are not limited to:

- shouting or swearing, either in person or on the telephone;
- physical or verbal intimidation;
- aggressive hand gestures;
- writing rude, defamatory, aggressive or abusive comments to/about a staff member (emails/social media);
- racist or sexist comments; and
- damage or violation of possessions/property.

In the event that staff safety and wellbeing is compromised as per any of the above, the staff member(s) will take steps to conclude the matter and ask the Parent, Volunteer or Visitor to leave the School grounds and seek administrative support.

When a Parent, Volunteer or Visitor behaves in such unacceptable ways, the Principal or a senior staff member will seek to resolve the situation and repair relationships through discussion and/or mediation. Where the behaviour of a Parent, Volunteer or Visitor is deemed likely to cause ongoing harm, distress or danger to the staff member, student or other members of the School community, the Principal may exercise his legal right to impose a temporary or permanent ban on the Parent, Volunteer or Visitor from entering the School premises. In all cases where there is an extreme act of violence that causes physical harm to a staff member, student or other member of the school community (including damage to his or her property), the incident will be reported to the police for investigation.

Please remember that email is an efficient communication tool when used effectively for positive communication. Emails deemed to be inappropriately negative will be forwarded to School leadership (i.e the Principal and Deputy Principal) and contact will be made directly with the relevant person. Emails sent too often may be deemed to be harassment. Parents, Volunteers and Visitors who use email communication to harass may lose the right to use this form of communication with the staff and also be subject to any of the actions listed above.

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the schools cyclical review process.

Policy ratified by Parent Education Board: 5 June 2018

Next review date: June 2020

Person responsible: Principal and Parish Education Board