



## Information and Guidance for Classroom Helpers

Thank you for volunteering to help our students in school. We feel that the involvement of parents/carers in education is vital and we encourage active participation in many ways. Some parents come to school to help with a variety of tasks such as art, cooking and especially reading and usually work with small groups. Other parents help when students are taken on visits outside school (excursions and swimming).

We believe that our school should be open and welcoming to all who would like to support the students. However, our overriding concern is for the safety of the students in our care. This document sets out the school's policy, which is to ensure that the students benefit from as much help and support as possible and are provided at the same time with the best possible security. All parents who help in school will be provided with a copy of this document and asked to **sign a copy of the Parent Helper Agreement and the Child Safe Code of Conduct**, which are attached.

We hope you find the information in this document helpful. If there is anything else you feel would help you, please contact the office.

### Aims

- To ensure that parents and carers are welcomed and valued as members of the School Community.
- To give clear guidelines on the ways in which parents/carers can help support our staff and students.

### Information

**Working with children Check:** There is a requirement for schools to carry out a 'Working with children' Check for all staff and volunteers who have contact with students. All schools need to hold a register of the checks undertaken. For you to work in schools as a volunteer, you will need to complete this specific form (online). Please be assured that all information will be treated in the strictest confidence and that these checks are done only in the best interests and safety of the students.

**Security:** For security reasons, please enter and exit via the School Office, sign in and out as a visitor via the kiosk and collect a volunteer lanyard. This should be worn at all times.

Signing in and out is essential as this enables us to know who is on site in case of an emergency.

**Fire Procedures:** Always follow the correct safety procedures during an emergency drill. Follow the teacher's instructions and stay with the class you are helping.

**Mobile Phones:** As a courtesy to others, please turn off mobile phones while you are in class.

**Food:** If you are taking food into our school, please check with the classroom teacher because some food may be inappropriate for students with food allergies.

**Attendance:** If you are helping on a regular basis and are unable to attend, please let the class teacher or school office know to assist with planning.

**Siblings:** To minimize disruptions to the class program, siblings should not be present when you participate as a parent helper and alternative care arrangements should be made.

## Guidelines

- Parents/carers helping in school with the students are always under the supervision of the class teacher who will explain the task, what is required of students and the helper's role within that setting. Parents/carers are expected to work co-operatively and professionally with staff. If you are unsure of what you have been asked to do, please check immediately, with the teacher.
- Classroom helpers are encouraged to use positive feedback rather than a negative response to things that have gone wrong.
- Please encourage the students to be independent. Encouragement and support are required whilst not "doing" things for the students.
- Helping to pack up is an essential part of learning too. We want all students to see packing up as a natural part of the activity and you as helper should never be the one who clears everything away.
- We seek to promote positive and acceptable behaviour and in doing so will actively praise and reward "appropriate" behavior.
- Please be aware that your presence in the classroom may well affect your student's behavior in all sorts of ways. Prepare your student for the experience in advance by explaining that you will be in the class to help all the students, the teacher is in charge and you have to do what the teacher has asked you as well!
- If a student does or tells you something that causes you concern, please tell the class teacher or Principal as soon as possible after the disclosure. Ensure you do this in an appropriate setting so that others cannot overhear.
- We have to follow very careful guidelines on aspects of physical contact with students:
  - 1) Please remember not to initiate contact with students and discourage over-familiarity.
  - 2) Please do not lift, carry or move a student in any way.
- Please do not use the opportunity as a classroom helper to seek additional information about your own student or other students e.g. looking in drawers, books.
- We generally seek parent/carer support to a maximum of one hour per week per family, allowing for other families to also have the opportunity to help in the class.
- Class teachers will distribute timetables of available help times.

## **Confidentiality**

Everyone working within the school is expected to respect their position and the access they have to confidential information.

It is very important that all staff, classroom helpers and other adults working in the school work to a policy of confidentiality. You may see students struggling with work, be upset or misbehaving or hear/see other information concerning a student while you are with us in school. It is not just students' progress that needs to be kept confidential. Some students have medical needs to which we must attend; some families have complex circumstances which mean a student must not join in some activities; and some students may be experiencing a traumatic time at home and their behaviour at school may be affected. We expect that all students are valued and respected.

Please do not be tempted to share anything you have seen or heard in the classroom with friends or family or a student's parent. We have well defined procedures for informing parents of what has happened whilst the students are in school and we will be the first to discuss any issues where we have concerns. If a classroom helper is approached by a parent and asked for information s/he should refer that parent/carer to the class teacher.

Similarly, classroom helpers working in the classroom should do so on the understanding that they support the teaching staff and will not pass opinion on such matters as discipline or teaching styles outside the school.

If you are concerned about something you have seen or heard or wish to voice concern regarding students, staff or any aspect of schooling you should discuss your concerns with the staff member in charge of the program in which they are involved. Volunteers should meet with the Principal or Assistant Principal to further discuss any concerns, in the event they are not satisfied with initial outcomes, after discussion with program leaders.

## **School Volunteer Tips - Remember to Be**

- **Honest** in your approach and attitude, which will aid in developing trust.
- **Patient** when working with students because when they are having difficulty with a subject they do not need additional pressure.
- **Flexible** in responding to the needs of students.
- **Friendly** because, with a smile and a thank you, you can accomplish miracles.
- **Respectful** by treating individuals in the same manner you wish to be treated.
- **Confidential** because it is very important that what is observed in the classroom remains confidential. Student performance or behaviour is not to be discussed with other parents.

## **Effective ways to work with students**

1. Be warm and friendly - learn the students' names and show interest in what they are doing and telling you. You are very important as a listener.
2. When working with students, encourage them to do their own thinking. Give them plenty of time to answer. Silence often means they are thinking and organising what they want to say or write.
3. If you don't know an answer or are unsure of what to do, admit it to the students and work it out together. Feel free to ask the teacher for help when you need it.
4. Use tact and positive comments. Encourage students and seek something worthy to compliment, especially when students are having difficulties.
5. Accept each student as they are—you do not need to feel responsible for judging a student's abilities, progress or behaviour.
6. Respect a student's privacy - if a student or teacher reveals personal information about a student, regard it as a confidence. Please keep it confidential!
7. Maintain a sense of humour.
8. Be consistent with the teacher's rules for classroom schedules and behaviour.
9. Wear appropriate clothing for your role (smart, clean, casual) and don't hesitate to get down to a student's height.
10. If parents and friends ask about what you do at school, tell them you enjoy working with the students and discuss the activities you do rather than specific information about the student, the teacher or the school.

## **Thank you**

Finally, a big “thank you” for your time, enthusiasm and patience. Both students and staff reap enormous benefits from your involvement in school and we hope that you enjoy helping in school and find it to be a rewarding experience.

**Maria Mandilas**