

## PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT

### RATIONALE

At Princes Hill Primary School we aim to provide an open, welcoming, inclusive and safe environment for all. We believe that parents are valuable contributors and participants in the life of our school.

Our School Values are outlined in the School Strategic Plan, which has been developed with the whole school community, and is located on the School Website. The most relevant of those values for the purpose of this document are: *respect* – we want our community to recognise and appreciate diversity, to value the contributions of others and to cooperate with and care for others; and *sense of community* – we want our community to promote partnerships between all members of our community and to interact positively with the negotiated rights and responsibilities of the school.

The conduct of school staff is regulated by:

- (a) The Victorian Institute of Teaching Code of Conduct for Teachers, and/or
- (b) The State Services Authority Code of Conduct for all Victorian Government Employees

Student conduct is regulated by the Student Code of Conduct.

### PURPOSE

This Parent Code of Conduct outlines the way in which our community requires all parents and family members to conduct themselves when visiting our school, participating in school activities and communicating with members of our school community (including students, school staff, other parents and visitors to our school).

### DEFINITIONS

This Code applies to all adults including parents, guardians, step-parents, grandparents, extended family, babysitters and any others while involved in activities or communication related to Princes Hill Primary School. For convenience, the term “parents” will be used throughout the document.

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

**Communication** Parents will use courteous and acceptable written and spoken language in all communications with students, staff and other parents and members of the school community. No profane, insulting, harassing, aggressive or otherwise offensive language may be used.

**Ethical Conduct** Parents will act in the best interests of students, their families and staff members. They will not engage in malicious or judgemental

gossip, and should ensure that anything they say about others is fair and truthful.

**Respect** We value our diverse community and respect the rights, religious beliefs and practices of individuals and their families. We respect points of view that are different from our own and all members of our community must refrain from actions and behaviour that constitutes harassment, discrimination or vilification.

### **WHEN VISITING SCHOOL**

Refer to Visitor Policy for requirements when visiting the school, including registration and health and safety requirements.

- (a) When attending any kind of school assembly or public meeting parents will listen respectfully, in the same manner required of students and staff, and will refrain from creating any noise or disturbance during performances or speeches by students, staff or visitors. Heckling will not be tolerated and a parent who heckles may be asked to leave.
- (b) Parents will treat all other visitors to our school, including Members of Parliament and representatives of the Department of Education, with courtesy and respect.
- (c) A parent may not interrupt or distract a teacher while classroom instruction or learning activities are underway.
- (d) A parent may not discipline a child who is not theirs or speak to a child who is not theirs about their behaviour. This is the role of teaching staff. Being approached by an adult they do not know can be distressing for children. Parents should therefore raise any behavioural, bullying or peer group issues with a member of the teaching staff and it is the teacher's responsibility to deal with these issues. (Common sense would apply in an emergency where a child is at risk of harm or where a parent is supervising a small group of students on an excursion.)
- (e) When visiting a classroom parents accept the authority of the teacher (or teachers) and that they are in attendance on the teacher's terms. Teachers value parental involvement and assistance, but they may ask a parent to leave a classroom or class activity for any reason, but not limited to:
  - i. parental assistance not being required at the time;
  - ii. parental presence in the classroom or at the activity is disturbing or distracting to any student or teacher;
  - iii. the parent is not in control of their emotions.

## **WHEN COMMUNICATING WITH SCHOOL STAFF**

- (a) All school staff are entitled to a safe and happy work environment. This is in the best interests of our children as well as staff themselves. Parents should therefore ensure that their interactions with staff do not create unnecessary stress and anxiety.
- (b) The priority for school staff is the welfare and education of all children in the school. School staff are therefore not required to respond to emails and telephone calls instantaneously. Normal service standards suggest that an acceptable response time for emails is 2 working days. Responses are not expected outside normal working hours or during school holidays unless it is an emergency.
- (c) The time available for parents to meet with staff is limited and must be scheduled at a time that does not disrupt the classroom. Parents should be mindful of the teacher's time, communicate the reason for the meeting and allow the teacher time to prepare, unless there is a genuine emergency that needs to be discussed. Teachers are on duty 8:45am – 3:45pm.

## **WHEN COMMUNICATING WITH SCHOOL COUNCIL**

- (a) School Council members welcome feedback from parents. But school council members are volunteers and engaged in their own work and activities during business hours. When parents communicate with school council members they should therefore establish that it is a convenient time, or ask to speak at a convenient time. Calling someone when they are at work may be assumed to be an inconvenient time.
- (b) Correspondence to school council may be forwarded to the school's email address. It will then be circulated to all school council members through their meeting papers and the correspondence folder. It will be discussed at the next school council meeting and a response will be sent within 2 working days of the school council meeting.
- (c) Parents should allow school council members an opportunity to discuss their correspondence at a properly constituted meeting of school council and therefore refrain from demanding an urgent response to their letter, sending the same letter multiple times, writing multiple times on the same subject or otherwise harassing school council members when they have not yet had an opportunity to discuss correspondence.
- (d) Parents are welcome to attend school council meetings. The basis upon which parents may attend and speak at school council meetings is set out in the School Council Standing Orders, which are available on the School Website, and parents are expected to comply with those Standing Orders and the rulings of the chairperson of the meeting.

## **WHEN COMMUNICATING WITH OTHER PARENTS**

- (a) Parents will respect the privacy of other parents' email addresses and will not send unsolicited emails or "spam" to school parents or forward unsolicited emails or spam that they receive to other parents. Parents will not forward other parents' email addresses without their permission. Parents provide their email address to the school in order to receive communications from the school about school related matters and their child. The school will not give out the email address of parents to other parents without permission. Parents give their email addresses to class representatives in order to receive communications about class activities, get together for their child's class, and to establish rosters for classroom help, fundraising activities and so on. Class representatives will not pass on parent email addresses to other parents without permission.
- (b) Parents who act as class representatives, Bazaar coordinators, Bazaar Committee members, Bazaar Stallholders, Mother's Day and Father's Day stall organisers and so on, are valued volunteers who play a critical role in our community and commit a great deal of time for the benefit of all. Apart from the general principles that always apply, parents should be particularly sensitive about the manner in which they provide feedback and ask questions of hardworking volunteers.

More information on privacy and volunteers refer to the school's Privacy Policy and Volunteer Policy.

## **WHEN MAKING A COMPLAINT**

Parents have the right to raise issues and concerns related to the education of their child or school matters. Parents should ensure that they raise their issues and concerns with the right person and follow the correct communication channels. When making a complaint parents should refer to:

- (a) The School Raising Concerns and Complaints Policy, which is available on the School Website; and
- (b) The Department of Education Complaints policy, which is available on its website and a link can be found from the School Complaints Policy on the School Website.

Parents must follow the procedures outlined in (a) and (b) above. It is a breach of this Parent Code of Conduct to make a complaint in a way that is not consistent with the School Complaints Policy, especially when the complaint is about a teacher or member of school staff.

## **CONSEQUENCES OF A BREACH OF PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT**

Any parent, member of school staff or student may notify the Principal or Assistant Principal of a possible breach of the Parent Code of Conduct. The Principal or Assistant Principal will investigate the complaint and if satisfied that a breach has occurred:

- (a) provide a first and final warning that a breach of the Code of Conduct has occurred and that a further breach will not be tolerated;
- (b) determine whether a breach may be rectified by the parent making a private or public apology, depending on the circumstances, to an individual or group of individuals;
- (c) where the breach concerned unacceptable behaviour on a visit to the school, issue a trespass warning to the parent, which, if the behaviour continues, may accelerate to a trespass notice requiring the parent to stay away from the school unless on the school grounds with the express permission of the Principal or Assistant Principal.

Correspondence that is in breach of this Code of Conduct, because of the language and expression used or the manner in which it is sent or delivered, will not be responded to. Similarly, correspondence that is deemed clearly “vexatious” will not be responded to.

Nothing in this Policy precludes any person from exercising their individual legal rights in respect of obtaining restraining and intervention orders, reporting assault, bringing action for defamation, exercising rights under vilification or discrimination laws or in any other way.

#### **OTHER SCHOOL POLICIES THAT MAY BE RELEVANT**

Privacy Policy  
Raising Concerns and Complaints Policy  
Volunteers’ Policy  
Visitors’ Policy

#### **OTHER LEGISLATION THAT MAY BE RELEVANT**

Working with Children Act  
Privacy Act

#### **REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed towards in 2016.