

St Michael's Primary School



Classroom Volunteer

Handbook

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Building Child Safe Communities

At St Michael's we pride ourselves on being a safe, honest, respectful learning community. The children know these expectations very clearly and we work as a school community to promote in a positive way the ongoing development of each child in becoming safe, honest respectful learners.

Clearly as adults we also have a responsibility to contribute to developing a community culture of mutual respect, honesty, ongoing positive support, inclusiveness and belonging, engagement with learning and forgiveness. Parents and staff at St Michael's achieve this community culture as we work together for the benefit of the children because we keep these ways of communicating and interacting at the forefront.

To focus on maintaining and building St Michael's as a Child Safe Community there are also a number of procedures at school to keep children safe. These include signing children in at the office if you are running late, adhering to traffic and parking rules when dropping off or picking up your child, using the pedestrian crossing when crossing the road with your child, instructing your child to wait in the supervised areas at dismissal time, and signing in as a visitor if entering the school during school hours. At times in the busy life of parents these procedures may feel a bit inconvenient but that is certainly not the intention. These sorts of procedures are all about keeping children safe and we appreciate your support in teaching the children how to be safe by following these procedures.

Similarly, Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta (CEDP) is committed to keeping children safe at all CEDP schools, Catholic Out of Schools Hours Care, Catholic Early Learning Centres and Trade Training Centres. Implementing a variety of practices that reduces potential risk forms part of our strategy to build child safe communities.

A range of checks and undertakings are required for people who work for or provide services, including the services of volunteers, to Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta.



Child Protection requirements for Volunteers

In order to become a school volunteer at St Michael's Primary school, all volunteers must complete Steps 1 and 2 below:

- Go St Michael's website - <http://www.stmichaelsbhills.catholic.edu.au>
Click on **Enrol Now**, go to **Get Involved**, click on **Child Protection Course** link. You will then be directed to the Catholic Education Office – Diocese of Parramatta website link

<http://childprotection.parra.catholic.edu.au/volunteers>

Complete Steps 1 and 2

- 1) **Step 1: Complete 'Building Child Safe Communities - Undertaking for Volunteers' Form**
- 2) **Step 2: Complete the online training module** (Updated content to be completed every two years)

You will receive a confirmation email once the form and/or training has been submitted. Your details are maintained confidentially in a central database and a copy of your confirmation is emailed to St Michael's for our records.

Classroom Volunteer Guidelines

The participation of volunteers in school activities is greatly valued at St Michael's Primary School.

We warmly welcome volunteers at school in many activities including helping with reading, excursions, sporting events and community events.

As a school community we encourage parent and other adult support and assistance in classrooms and acknowledge that effective volunteer programs assist school-home relationships and enhance children's learning.

The following guidelines have been created to assist all volunteers in their role as helpers within the school.

Role of Classroom Volunteers

- To liaise with teachers and provide individual and group support to the education of children within the school.
- To provide a helping hand for various class activities within the school and on excursions where appropriate.
- To support particular educational needs of children in a wide variety of classroom activities

Why parents like to volunteer as classroom helpers at St Michael's

I volunteer to:

- Share learning with our children.
- Meet the students in my child's grade and other parents.
- Help the teachers and to develop a strong partnership with my child's teacher.
- Be an active participant in my child's learning.

I volunteer because:

- I enjoy working with the children.
- My child loves to see me in the classroom
- I like to help and support the teachers at St Michael's.

"Experience shows that once parents understand the actual role and responsibilities of their volunteer activity, then the parent's enjoyment and effectiveness are increased and the children's learning is enhance."

Barry Dwyer

Confidentiality

Confidentiality of all members of the school community is respected. Classroom volunteers operate on the premise of genuine respect and trust for each child and adult.

- Classroom volunteers have many responsibilities, form many relationships and sometimes share sensitive and confidential information. The highest professional ethics must be understood, observed, valued and practised by all volunteers at all times.
- Classroom volunteers maintain confidentiality regarding child and classroom practices. Volunteers are expected to promote our school's mission and vision statement and consistently apply these values in their role as a volunteer.

The school has a clearly defined Student Wellbeing Policy. This policy aims to provide a safe and stable environment for our children in which they can learn in a positive and nurturing environment.

Within our school our students have rights to be safe, cared for and to learn. At St Michael's we believe that authentic Catholic schools are committed to the development of the whole person, which we achieve by:

- providing love, caring and secure environments.
- recognising the individuality and dignity of each student.
- fostering life-giving relationships within the school community.
- (Pastoral Care Guidelines for Catholic Schools, 2007)

Parent Volunteers support the Wellbeing Policy of the school and refer all discipline problems directly to the classroom teacher.

Volunteers are encouraged to build a positive relationship with the child and actively encourage positive behaviour at all times. It is not the role of the volunteer to enforce discipline, nor accept inappropriate behaviour.

Presence of Preschoolers

Unfortunately preschoolers and infants are unable to be present in the classroom or on excursions if you have nominated yourself as a volunteer. Likewise at swimming, sport carnivals or P&F events where you have committed yourself to a volunteer role. It is essential that when you are a parent volunteer, that your full attention is given to your role.

Contact with your own child

Parents may occasionally work with their own child but the role of a parent volunteer is to provide support to the teacher and general classroom members. It is highly possible that they may not be allocated to work with their own child during any particular term/year.

It is expected that all volunteers would chat with their child to explain their role and responsibilities prior to first commencing their voluntary activities. Clear directions for contact with their child whilst in the classroom needs to be negotiated relative to the age and stage of the child.

Attendance

It is expected that the classroom volunteer will maintain the highest respect for regular attendance and appropriate time commitments as negotiated with the classroom teacher.

Classroom volunteers are expect to sign in at the school office and wear a school visitor's badge whilst in the school grounds.

Please stay within the designated areas of your visit. A visitor's toilet is available. Please obtain the key from the office staff.

Contact with the Classroom Teacher

The foremost responsibility of every teacher is the duty of care they have for the children in their class. Parents and classroom volunteers are expected to acknowledge this important role and minimise interruptions to classroom learning and commitments of teachers during class time.

To facilitate effective communication between the teacher and volunteers, the following strategies will be employed:

- Classroom teachers will provide specific information about the role and practical responsibilities of the classroom volunteer within the grade and provide an opportunity for volunteers to ask questions and clarify roles.
- A protocol for volunteers relevant to the grade and activity will be available from the teacher.
- Issues of concern are to be discussed with the classroom teacher only. No discussion is to be undertaken with other volunteers. Respect for the child is to be maintained at all times.

Onsite Training for Parent Volunteers

St Michael's values the family-school partnership with the aim to facilitate student learning and motivation. The school may provide workshops/discussions/meetings and demonstrations around the areas of literacy and numeracy, home and class work to all stages within the school as part of the parent education programme.

- Classroom volunteers will be involved in these formal and informal learning opportunities.
- Conversations about learning will be provided to further support class volunteers, parents and carers.
- Classroom/grade teachers may organise particular training sessions for classroom volunteers.

Volunteers outside classrooms

At St Michael's a variety of excursions are planned throughout the year. These are integral parts of the children's learning and are not social outings. Parent volunteers are encouraged to participate and support group activities.

Parent volunteers will be briefed when appropriate for their particular roles.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if the parent of my volunteer child wants information? What do I say?

I really enjoy working with, but it's not my role to comment on his/her learning. Why don't you have a chat to the teacher?

I like being a volunteer but can't comment about individual children in my group. We all agreed to respect each child and not chat about their work/learning.

How much do I need to know about my child's special needs?

Classroom helpers are given specific activities appropriate to the level of the child. If there is a special issue that needs to be communicated to the helper, the teacher will let you know.

Should I / how do I discipline a naughty child in my care?

Use positive comments that affirm your high expectations. If problems persist, contact the classroom teacher.

How/when do I talk to the teacher about concerns I may have about my (volunteer) child?

If concerns need immediate attention, write a message for the teacher to contact you - leaving several appropriate times you are available.

As a volunteer, do I just arrive and go into the class, or wait outside until invited in?

Generally wait outside until invited to enter the classroom.

Can I debrief with other volunteers?

NO - maintaining respect for each child is essential.

What if I am late - or cannot attend my roster?

Please contact the school office.

Tools for the Classroom Volunteer

Discipline

Volunteers are encouraged to build positive relationships with the child/group and expect the child's behaviour to be based on respect and cooperation. It is not the role of the volunteer to enforce discipline, nor accept unsuitable behaviour.

Occasionally children have 'off' days and may be inappropriate in their comments or attitude. You may use the following sentences to encourage and remind them of the correct behaviour:

- I am disappointed in that comment/behaviour/attitude
- When you say/behave that way, I am disappointed because ...
- That's not the cooperative reader/student I normally see. Let's start again and see if you can do better.
- I always enjoy our special times together, but I don't think you are concentrating/trying today. How can we improve this?
- This is a special time for us, let's not waste it! Let's see how well we can work together from now on.
- I am always proud of your efforts in reading/learning. Today's not a good day is it? Let's wipe the board clean and get back to the task.

Bright ideas from Michael Grose (Parenting Ideas, 1996)

Remember a calm, positive and firm approach works best. Use a calm, firm voice and ask the child to stop what he or she is doing.

1. Use the child's name if possible.
2. Repeat the response if the behaviour doesn't stop.
3. Give the child/group an opportunity to respond if appropriate. Ask questions to clarify the child's position. Be polite but firm and always avoid negative comments or put downs. If frustration continues, end the session and send the child back to the classroom teacher.

See also www.parentingideas.com.au or www.abc.net.au/learn or www.bostes.nsw.edu.au for additional strategies.

Classroom Volunteers Code of Ethics

Classroom volunteers have many responsibilities, form many relationships and share sometimes sensitive and confidential information. The highest professional ethics must be understood, observed, valued and practised by all participants in classroom activities.

Classroom volunteer participants are required to reflect and espouse the school's mission and vision statement and:

- acknowledge that schools operate as part of the teaching mission of the Catholic church and that volunteers operate to support the school and children within the school.
- work with fellow members in a spirit of harmony and collaboration, to support the dignity of the child and the Catholic community.
- apply respect for all children and teachers within the school.
- actively encourage positive behaviour at all times, seeking the support of the teacher if problems occur.
- commit to regular attendance and punctuality as negotiated with the classroom teacher.
- respect confidential information shared during voluntary activities meetings.
- accept the duties and responsibilities as set out in the classroom volunteer handbook.



Thank you Volunteers