



# St Matthew's School

## Volunteers' Policy

The staff of St Matthew's are committed to providing a safe learning environment that enhances the physical, educational and social development of our students. The contribution of visiting members of the school community is an integral part of our school and is highly valued.

The purpose of this Volunteers' policy is to set out the standards of behaviour expected of those who assist in the school and to detail the necessary procedures that will help solve issues as soon as possible so that a safe and harmonious school environment is maintained.

Today it is generally accepted that when parents express confidence in the school and are involved with it in some way, their children are likely to be happier and perform better in the classroom. Young children view their parents and staff sharing common beliefs, attitudes and goals. They therefore feel more secure and more purposeful.

At St Matthew's, we try 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;
- fewer crises and misunderstandings;
- higher student morale and confidence;
- more goodwill and mutual esteem between parents and staff; and
- a happier school

Volunteers are encouraged and invited to help in the school with varying activities under the supervision of the individual class teachers. Parents and volunteers play a valuable role in the classroom in extending the children's experiences and access to adult assistance. We value parent and volunteer support in all areas including language activities, art and craft, physical education, library, canteen, excursions etc. We appreciate the extra personal involvement parent and volunteer participation permits the children and know that it is a rewarding experience for parents to observe children in their "work" situation. At St Matthew's, great value is placed upon our volunteer helpers.

### **Parent Helpers:**

- Enable the teacher to provide a wider range of activities.
- Enable the teacher to ensure that small groups have adult supervision.
- Work 1:1 with students providing quality learning experiences.
- Share their expertise to enrich programs e.g. craft activities
- Assist in the preparation of work tasks and the setting up of equipment

The children really benefit from having their parents in the class/school with them.

### **Guidelines for Volunteers**

The classroom teacher is responsible for the education, control and behaviour management of the children. The volunteer is a helper, working under his / her direction.

The classroom teacher is the professional and facilitates the learning. The school expects 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 it insists that parents and volunteers do not discuss classroom, events, and/or "children" outside the class or school.

Because teachers are entrusted with the development of whole classes of children and have the long term good of each child at heart, we ask that volunteer helpers also provide for all the children - confidentiality, support and equal opportunities they would wish for their own child.

The teacher, as the caring professional and facilitator, will at all times provide the guidance needed by classroom helpers. If there is any part of the program that helpers are not clear about, we ask that they discuss it with the teacher, and not outside the classroom.

### **Confidential Information**

Occasionally in school you will become aware of information about children which is confidential or private to the child or their family. This is a delicate matter that requires a great deal of tact on your part. Any information that leads you to believe a child is at risk should be mentioned to the Principal. But any conversation with parents outside is a breach of the school's confidence.

Even a comment such as, 'your Jimmy reads well,' is not acceptable as others will wonder why you have not said that to them. It is very important to treat anything

you hear or see in school with regard to particular children as being in absolute confidence and entirely a matter within the school.

Similarly, you may find that parents who are friends will ask about the progression or behaviour of their children in school. Again, this is a matter requiring a great deal of tact on your part and it is very important that you firmly suggest that if they are worried in any way about their child then they must discuss the matter themselves with the class teacher.

### **Supervising Children**

Whenever you are supervising children, the following points will be of help:

1. Always treat children with respect and in the same sort of way that you would expect them to treat you.
2. Be friendly towards them.
3. Do not raise your voice. If you speak normally to the children, they will have to be quiet to hear what you are saying.
4. Tell them exactly what to do in as much detail as possible.
5. Don't be afraid to quietly and calmly correct a child that is misbehaving but never physically handle the children at any time. If in doubt, speak to the nearest member of staff.
6. Praise the children wherever possible.
7. Do not let the children become 'silly' or over-friendly with you. They must learn to behave socially towards adults who are not close friends. Encourage them to be polite to one another.
8. If you are concerned about a child for any reason, have a word with the class teacher - do not speak directly to the parents of the child. This is the teacher's job.

### **Hearing Readers**

This is an important but time-consuming task. The exact approach will depend on several factors, including the child's level of development and the learning goals established by the teacher. The following will outline some general strategies for:

#### **Beginning readers**

1. Children should be aware that you read from left to right, turning the pages that way and reading the lines left to right and top to bottom.
2. Read the book together to start with.
3. Discuss the pictures and the story.
4. Read the book again pointing to each word as you read.

## **Early reader**

1. Discuss the pictures and the story.
2. Read the story together.
3. Ask the child to find key words which are repeated several times in the book i.e. 'the', 'up', 'in', etc.
4. The children should be aware of full stops and that you need to pause at a full stop and not to run sentences together.

## **Extending reading**

As the children can read more words try to get them to work out new words by making a good logical guess. Maybe the picture will help. If the child has good knowledge of initial sounds, looking at the first letter strings or small words within words, sound out the whole word

e.g. ing in king

Try to get the child to read to the end of the sentence and then go back to work out an unknown word.

Even with competent readers you should discuss the stories and pictures. Also, you can try to encourage the children to use expression or put on suitable voices.

## **Discussion Questions**

The following are examples of the types of questions to use when discussing a story.

What was the story about?

Who was the main character?

What sort of a person was he?

Was that a sensible thing to do?

What should he have done? Which part did you like best? What would have happened if....? Try to relate some ideas to the children's own experiences. i.e. Can you....? Have you ever?

## **In Conclusion**

In order to promote volunteerism in our school, it is essential for all volunteers to adhere to a professional code of conduct. We ask that volunteers subscribe to the following:

**Attitude**

Come to school with a positive attitude, one that will say to the children you are working with "You are so special, I'm glad that I have an opportunity to work with you".

**Dependability**

Be reliable. If you have committed to being involved, it is very frustrating to teachers and children if planned activities have to be cancelled due to non-attendance of support.

**Communication**

Your volunteer work should be a learning activity for you. When you have questions about policy and procedures, ask an appropriate person – the teacher or a member of the school's administration.

**Confidentiality**

Working in classrooms, you will know the children who are succeeding and the children who are struggling. You may find out personal details about children and their families. Remember that any information pertaining to a child or their family must remain in the classroom.

**Support**

As a school volunteer, you are in a perfect position to support the entire school community both inside and outside of the school. Be positive in your comments about the school and bring issues of concern to the Administration, as the reputation of a school is a fragile and valuable quality.

As a school volunteer, adhering to the Code of Conduct, you will become part of the school team whose goal is to provide opportunities for all children to learn. Be aware that failure to adhere to the Code of Conduct can result in you not being invited into classes.

We hope that you enjoy your time as a volunteer helper. If there is anything we can do to assist you in this important role, please don't hesitate to speak to the class teacher or an Assistant Principal. You are always very welcome at St Matthew's.

Please return the following page only. -----

St Matthew's Volunteer Helpers Code of Conduct

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

I have read and understood the contents of this policy. I agree to abide by the guidelines for volunteer helpers that are set out in this Volunteer's Policy.

I agree:

- to maintain confidentiality at all times;
- to abide by the guidelines of the Volunteer's Policy as stated by the school.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please complete this form and return it to the office as soon as possible. Thank you for the support you are giving to the teachers and students. It is greatly appreciated.*