



PARENT VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

2017

SMMPS VISION STATEMENT

*Inspired by the Gospels
and in the spirit of St. Mary MacKillop,
we never see a need without taking action.*

We live and celebrate our Catholic faith.

*In and through positive relationships,
we aspire to protect all children under our care,
prioritising their safety and wellbeing.*

*We learn to be,
to know,
to do,
to live together
and to change.*

We are a community of lifelong learners.

What a Difference Parent Volunteers Make!

Dear Parent Volunteer:

On behalf of all the students and staff, we want to thank you for volunteering at SMMPS. In whatever way you choose to help, whether in the classroom or other school programs, you can be sure your contribution is needed and valued.

At St Mary MacKillop Primary School, we aspire to develop a culture of community engagement and success.

This handbook was prepared to give you some guidance in your experience as a school volunteer. The roles and responsibilities of the school volunteer listed in this handbook will provide you with the 'basics' for making your volunteering a success. Some of the techniques and strategies you can use to help children learn are discussed briefly. Naturally, the teacher will always be nearby to provide directions and to answer your questions.

We are most appreciative of the time and talent you are donating.

Thank you very much for your support.

Sincerely,

Mr Anthony McCluskey,
Principal

GETTING STARTED:

Before starting your first volunteer task, we ask all volunteers to be aware of the following points:

- Always sign in and out at the school office. It is very important for staff to know that you are in the building, and it makes it easier to locate you in an emergency. Always obtain a 'Visitor' badge that identifies you.
- As a courtesy to others, please turn off mobile phones whilst on the school premises.
- Always follow the correct safety procedures during a DISPLAN (emergency drill). Follow the teacher's instructions and stay with the class you are helping.
- Act as a good role model for the children by being safety-conscious.

Confidentiality

To make sure that students, staff and families feel secure, we all need to respect privacy. This is also a legal concern. Because individuals can be harmed by inappropriate disclosures, volunteers must be careful to honour confidentiality. Breaching confidentiality can be hurtful to children, their families and the staff. It can also harm the good reputation of the school.

Once anyone begins to work in a school setting, he/she becomes privy to knowledge about children's behaviour patterns, academic ability, emotional maturity, relationships with others, etc. In some cases, information of this nature is imparted in order that the volunteer might work more effectively with the child. In other cases, it is simply acquired in the course of frequent contact in the school. Please respect the confidentiality of this information.

In addition, volunteers are in a position to learn more about staff members than would normally be learned from their 'public image'. One also forms personal opinions about the professional competency of the individual teachers and administrators. There is nothing wrong with the volunteer possessing such knowledge and arriving at personal conclusions. However, this knowledge or these opinions should never be shared in the community or with anyone who has no legitimate need to know. Similarly, care must be taken not to make comments harmful to the reputation of any pupil, professional or other volunteer. If problems develop, the line of communication regarding a situation in the school is always first with the staff member concerned and then, if necessary, with the Principal.

A volunteer has every right to expect that his or her participation will be treated with the same confidentiality and respect.

Disclosure of Possible Abuse

In Victoria, it is the legal obligation to report any suspected case of child abuse. If a child indicates to you that he/she has been or is the victim of abuse, or you have strong suspicions that a student may have been abused, inform the child's teacher, Principal or Deputy Principal.

One of the most difficult things to handle may be when the student asks the person in whom they have confided to "promise not to tell". A volunteer cannot make such a promise and should be clear about that to the child. Don't try to 'counsel' the child. Remain merely an empathic 'listening ear' without being judgmental or trying to offer solutions. Assistance and counselling should come from those professionals with the responsibility and experience to provide it.

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 any learning 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.

PARENT VOLUNTEERS are:

RESPONSIBLE

- ❖ **Dependable** and recognises the vital importance of regular attendance.
- ❖ **Appreciative** of the efforts of the school to educate all children and to provide maximum learning opportunities for each child
- ❖ **Supportive** of the administration and teaching staff
- ❖ **Aware** of the importance of planning
- ❖ **Sincerely** concerned about the students
- ❖ **Able** to generate enthusiasm about each child
- ❖ **Willing** to be discreet, dedicated and punctual
- ❖ **Professional** in his or her dress, commitment and manner.

BUILD RAPPORT

- ❖ **Recognises** the child's need to improve self-image and independent learning
- ❖ **Supports** the child by offering genuine guidance
- ❖ **Recognises** the individuality of each student
- ❖ **Provides** a relaxed, friendly and caring atmosphere for students
- ❖ **Respects** the teacher and school's ultimate responsibility for the health, welfare and education of each student
- ❖ **Provides** opportunities for each child to be successful
- ❖ **Cooperates**, coordinates and communicates continually with staff
- ❖ Is **Comfortable** asking for clarification and is willing to express concerns and questions with staff
- ❖ **Recognises** the essential need for confidentiality and will not comment or gossip about individual students, staff members or the school.

REWARDS

- ❖ Is **Relational** in all interactions with staff and students
- ❖ **Provides** the teacher or staff member with the satisfaction of knowing that the students' needs are being met and that quality education is being promoted, extended and enriched
- ❖ **Receives** the sincere gratitude of the school community
- ❖ **Celebrates** in the knowledge that he or she has made a difference in a child's life.

HOW CHILDREN LEARN

Children learn by doing, by asking questions and by searching for answers to their questions. They learn by discovering and experimenting. They learn by using all their senses when possible. They learn by sorting and combining objects and ideas. They learn by repeating experiences. Children learn behaviour by observing people they respect.

Success builds success.

How You Can Help Children Learn

1. Let children participate in activities as frequently as possible
2. Ask children questions that may lead them to the correct answer instead of telling them directly
3. Let children explore and discover by themselves
4. Let children try new methods of doing things even though you already know an easier way
5. Let children sort and combine according to their own ideas
6. Let children observe you as a model for appropriate behaviour (sharing, showing respect, talking quietly, taking turns, etc.).
7. When speaking to children
 - ❖ Praise their good efforts
 - ❖ Use a tone of voice that will encourage them and make them feel confident
 - ❖ Avoid comparing children and their work
 - ❖ Give children a choice only when you intend to abide by the choice
 - ❖ State directions in a positive form (“We use blocks for building” rather than “Don’t throw the blocks”)

HOW TO KEEP CHILDREN ON TASK

Good student management strategies support a sense of order in the classroom, throughout the buildings and on the school premises. A sense of order offers security and comfort as well as a climate conducive to teaching and learning. Student management strategies should proactively encourage and acknowledge good behaviour and support actions which promote the pursuit of the best possible learning. SMMPS classroom codes of behaviour incorporate strategies for fostering, recognising and rewarding positive behaviour, in addition to outlining the potential consequences for inappropriate behaviour.

Finally, school discipline is a process involving several partners in education; namely, the school leadership, the educators, the parents and guardians, the students and the community.

We would encourage you to:

- Call each child by name (name tags or cards are helpful at first).
- The best techniques are preventative. Set standards before every lesson. "Today we will walk slowly to the library." "You will put up your hand when you finish with your work." Then instruct the children as though you expect them to comply.
- Give positive, specific praise - "I like the way Anthony is working quietly." "What good Maths workers". "You are doing a great job of working cooperatively." State positive actions - "Walk quietly" instead of "Don't run!"
- Give sufficient warnings and time. Here are some examples:
 - *"Mary, in five minutes you'll need to stop painting and put your apron away, wash your hands and then come and sit on the floor."*
 - *"Joseph, I asked you not to play with the headsets. Now you need to leave the listening post and go to the book corner. Tomorrow you can work with the listening post again, but you'll need to remember the rules."*
- Keep your voice as low as possible. The children will get louder as your voice gets louder. Have an unhurried attitude. Enjoy them and they will enjoy you.
- Offer each child a chance to participate.
- Count slowly from 1 to 5 when you want clean-up to occur.
- Be sure a child understands what you're saying. We sometimes use words that children do not know. Ask them to repeat directions to check for understanding.