

# **Parent Volunteer Handbook**

## **St Joseph's Catholic Primary School**



**We at St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School Pinjarra,**

**seek to create a God centred environment**

**where each school community member is nurtured spiritually,**

**academically, socially and physically.**

## **What a difference parent volunteers make!**

Dear Parent Volunteer

Thank you for choosing to be part of the St Joseph's Catholic Primary School community. Your commitment to volunteering, whether in classrooms or school programs, makes a meaningful difference to our students' educational journey.

Research consistently shows that strong partnerships between schools and their community directly enhance student achievement. This evidence drives our commitment to fostering meaningful connections between students, teachers, parents and our wider community.

This handbook provides essential guidance for your role as a school volunteer, including key responsibilities and practical strategies for supporting student learning. Your classroom teacher will always be available to provide direction and support throughout your volunteering experience.

Your generous gift of time and expertise enriches our school community and we are truly grateful for your dedication to our students' success.

Warm regards

Ms Vanessa Gangell  
Principal

Mrs Tracy O'Dwyer  
Assistant Principal

**St Joseph's Catholic Primary School...A Catholic School of excellence where every child is known.**



## **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 front office. It is imperative we know you are on site and it makes it easier to locate you in an emergency. Always obtain a 'visitor' lanyard or sticker on arrival.
- Follow the correct safety procedures during an emergency drill. Follow the teacher's instructions and stay with the class you are helping.
- Discuss with the classroom teacher to determine when you are needed, how often you are needed and for what types of activities you are needed to support student learning.
- Parent volunteer rosters are placed outside classrooms. Please note, volunteer times are usually during the morning block-8:40am to 11:00am.
- Volunteers are not to be accompanied by minors under the age of 18 without prior permission from the Principal.

## **Confidentiality and Trust in Our School Community**

As valued members of our school community, volunteers play an essential role in supporting student learning. With this role comes access to sensitive information about our students, staff and families. Maintaining confidentiality is not just a legal obligation, it is fundamental to preserving trust and respect within our school community.

Through your work in our school, you may become aware of information about students' learning abilities, behaviour, personal circumstances or family situations. You may also gain insights into staff members' teaching methods and professional practices. While this knowledge helps you better support our students, it must remain within the school setting.

If concerns arise, please follow our communication protocol: first discuss with the relevant staff member, then if needed, with the Assistant Principal or Principal. This ensures all matters are handled professionally and appropriately.

Remember that confidentiality is reciprocal—you can expect your own participation and contribution to be treated with the same level of privacy and respect.

Your commitment to maintaining confidentiality helps create a safe, trusting environment where all members of our school community can thrive.

Thank you for your understanding and support in this important matter.

## **Responding to Student Disclosures**

**Safeguarding Our Students: Your Legal Responsibility.**

As a school volunteer, you have a legal obligation to report any suspicion of child abuse. If a student discloses information suggesting they may be experiencing abuse, you must immediately inform the classroom teacher, Assistant Principal or Principal.

Students often share sensitive information with people they trust and may ask you to keep it secret. While this shows their trust in you, you cannot and should not promise confidentiality in these situations. Instead, respond with honesty and care:

- Thank them for trusting you
- Explain gently that you must share this information to ensure their safety
- Connect them promptly with appropriate staff members

Please remember that counselling should only be provided by qualified professionals. Your role is to report the disclosure to the school leadership team who will take the necessary steps to protect the student's wellbeing.

The safety of our students is our highest priority and your vigilance helps ensure all children in our care are protected.

## **Code of Conduct**

The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to describe minimum standards of conduct in all behaviour and decision making to ensure the safety and well-being of students. The Code applies to staff, students, volunteers, parents and guardians. Our three school rules underpin all aspects of the Code of Conduct.

Conduct Statements...

1. You act safely and competently.
2. You give priority to students' safety and well-being in all your behaviour and decision making.
3. You act in accordance with the values of the Gospel as defined in the Code of Ethical Conduct.
4. You conduct yourself in accordance with laws, agreements, policies and standards relevant to your relationship with the school community.
5. You respect the dignity, culture, values and beliefs of each member of the school community.
6. You treat personal information about members of the school community as private and confidential.

7. You give impartial, honest and accurate information about the education, safety and well-being of students.
8. You support all members of the school community in making informed decisions about students.
9. You promote and preserve the trust and privilege inherent in your relationship with all members of the school community.
10. You maintain and build on the community's trust and confidence in Catholic schools and the Church.
11. You act reflectively and ethically.
12. You allow students to have a voice in their education, safety and well-being.

### **Understanding How Children Learn**

Children are natural learners who thrive through:

- Active exploration and hands-on experiences
- Asking questions and seeking answers
- Using all their senses to discover and understand
- Experimenting with new ideas and approaches
- Repeating experiences to build confidence
- Observing and modelling behaviour from trusted adults

### **Supporting Student Learning**

Create opportunities for authentic learning by:

- Encouraging active participation in activities
- Using open-ended questions that promote thinking ("What might happen if...?" "How could we solve this?")
- Allowing time for self-discovery and problem-solving
- Embracing different approaches, even when you know a quicker solution
- Letting students develop their own sorting and organising systems
- Modelling positive behaviour and learning attitudes

Remember: Success breeds success. When children experience achievement through their own efforts, they develop confidence to tackle new challenges.

### Positive Teaching Approach

Focus on creating an environment where students are actively engaged and supported in their learning journey. This maximises instructional time and builds student confidence through encouragement and recognition of effort.

Your role as a volunteer is to support this natural learning process by being patient, encouraging and allowing students to develop their understanding through guided discovery.

## **Creating a Positive Learning Environment**

### Effective Rules

- Use positive language that guides behaviour "Please walk quietly" rather than "Don't run"
- Keep instructions clear and specific "Gentle hands on the equipment" rather than "Be careful"
- Set realistic and achievable expectations "Take turns sharing the materials" rather than "Everyone must share"

### Meaningful Praise

#### The Power of Specific Recognition

- Be explicit: "I notice you're sitting quietly with your eyes on the speaker - that's excellent listening!"
- Show genuine enthusiasm in your voice and manner
- Recognise positive behaviour the moment it happens
- Acknowledge effort consistently, especially with new skills
- Provide frequent encouragement when students are learning new behaviours

Remember: Effective praise builds confidence and reinforces positive choices. When children understand exactly what they're doing well, they're more likely to repeat that behaviour.

Your consistent, positive approach helps create an environment where students feel secure and motivated to learn.

## **Restorative Practice**

A restorative approach builds a harmonious environment by fostering the development of healthy relationships and effective management of conflict and tension.

Restorative Practice had its beginnings as restorative justice, from the criminal justice system. It has since been adapted for use in schools. A restorative approach is a philosophy...it is the umbrella over all positive programs and approaches in schools.

Research in Australia and overseas is showing that by using a restorative approach, students take more responsibility for sorting out their behavior issues, there are less referrals to administration, the school culture changes, attendance improves, students feel heard and more connected, and significantly, there is an improvement in academic levels.

## URStrong

URSTRONG's Friendology curriculum aims to enhance the social and emotional learning and wellbeing of children through friendship skills. It explicitly teaches children a common language for confidently managing conflict and creating a culture embedded in respect and kindness. URSTRONG strives to empower students with the skills and self-confidence to develop healthier relationships. URSTRONG works with parents and educators to ensure a whole-school approach.

The program covers topics such as developing and maintaining friendships, putting a voice to feelings, conflict resolution, respect and thinking about others' feelings, communication (e.g. active listening) and managing difficult situations (e.g. birthday party invitations, saying 'no').

You can support students through a Friendship Fire, for example, by helping them 'Talk-it-out'.

1. Find a good time to talk, just the two of you.
2. In a calm, serious voice, retell the situation.
3. Then say: "I'm sorry for...Instead I should have..."
4. Listen to their side and 'Talk-it-out' until the 'Fire-is-out!'"

FRIENDSHIP FIRES®...

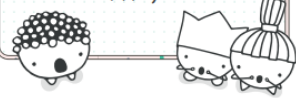
# BIGGER OR SMALLER?

WHAT'S YOUR NEXT MOVE?

WHEN THAT FRIENDSHIP FIRE® SPARKS, WHAT WILL YOU DO? THROW MORE FUEL ON THAT FIRE OR, TRY TO PUT IT OUT, ONCE & FOR ALL?

READ THE SCENARIOS BELOW & DECIDE IF THAT KIDS' ACTIONS WOULD MAKE THEIR FRIENDSHIP FIRE® BIGGER OR SMALLER?


You have a Friendship Fire® with a friend. You feel so upset and angry that you start telling your other friends all about what your friend did to you!



This Friendship Fire's® going to get...

☐ BIGGER ☐ SMALLER

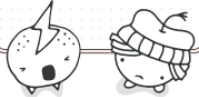
Your friend is upset with you and you listen when they tell you why. Even though you really want to defend yourself, you give them a chance to explain their side of the story.



This Friendship Fire's® going to get...

☐ BIGGER ☐ SMALLER


After having a Friendship Fire® with a friend, you feel so mad you start yelling nasty, mean, hurtful things at them to get revenge.



This Friendship Fire's® going to get...

☐ BIGGER ☐ SMALLER

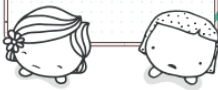
You're really frustrated with your friend. You know you need to calm down before you Talk-it-Out. You go for a walk, grab some water and try to cool off.



This Friendship Fire's® going to get...

☐ BIGGER ☐ SMALLER

Your friend apologises to you, but you are still feeling annoyed! So you say, "Whatever!", and turn your back on them.



This Friendship Fire's® going to get...

☐ BIGGER ☐ SMALLER

URSTRONG Resource, Friendship Fires® Bigger or Smaller? © 2024

## **Volunteer opportunities**

Volunteer opportunities include...

- Classroom helper
- Library helper
- Excursions
- Athletics and swimming carnivals
- P&F
- School Advisory Council
- Busy Bees
- Canteen

Please see the Assistant Principal or Principal if you require more information.



**"What is the essence of life?**

**To serve others and to do good." ~ Aristotle.**