



PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY

Relevant to:	All parents, guardians, step-parents, grandparents, extended family members and care-givers of students
Developed by:	Management Team
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Related Documents:	Feedback and Complaints Management Policy and Feedback and Complaints against the Principal Procedure

PURPOSE

This Code of Conduct sets out the expectations of the School in relation to the conduct of Parents and Guardians of students of the School, as part of building a culture of respect, care and safety in the Tamar Valley Steiner School community. This document aims to ensure that the required standards of behaviour are clear to parents, as well as the implications of non-compliance, which in serious cases can include cessation of student enrolment.

RATIONALE

Tamar Valley Steiner School (in this document, ‘the School’) is committed to ensuring a respectful community and learning environment that is safe, positive and supportive for all students, staff and visitors of the School. The School values and encourages diversity and equal opportunity and wishes to ensure that all people in the School community are treated with dignity, fairness, courtesy, mutual trust and respect at all times. The School wishes to ensure that the School environment is free from bullying, harassment, discrimination, vilification, victimisation, and violence.

The relationship between the primary Class teacher and parent at Tamar Valley Steiner School is critically important for ensuring that the students’ wellbeing and learning. The school places a strong emphasis on supporting this relationship to be healthy through holding expectations of acceptable conduct of teachers, parents and students and using the appropriate feedback and complaint procedures.

The school’s expectations of the staff to engage deeply with the students and their families is a critical ingredient of the education offered at the school. This dynamic also means that staff have a strong emotional investment in their work. The work of a Steiner teacher requires an open heartedness which leaves staff more vulnerable to being hurt by doubt, distrust and critique of their intent or professionalism from families. Feelings of hurt by feedback from parents may arise when there is not warmth and an understanding that staff are coming with good intent towards supporting children. In addition to this, the school holds high expectations that staff will not blame, judge or critique parents around the issues that are presented by a child; and the school requests that parents also don’t blame, judge or critique staff around how a child presents at school. The most effective way to establish and

maintain a collaborative support network for the child is for all to trust that the others are doing their best for the overall education and wellbeing of the child.

Another unique aspect of Steiner schools is that teachers stay with the same cohort of students for several years and may even rotate to take a new class for several more years. This means that within the small community, the strengths and challenges of different staff may be well-known within their group of parents. All people, including teachers, are evolving and deserve the opportunity to learn and grow. For staff to function in a supportive environment that enables them to bring their best selves and support the students, they require parents and guardians to adhere to positive standards of conduct. It is essential that parents understand the potentially damaging impact of poor conduct. This is why the school requires parents to have a good understanding and commit to what is acceptable conduct at this school. This is especially important to maintain in relation to providing feedback and resolving any concerns or complaints about staff or the school. More explicit guidance on how to bring feedback and concerns is in the Feedback and Complaints Policy and Procedure.

The School requires parents and guardians to role model respectful behaviours, together with all staff, to build a safe environment where all students can develop and flourish. This Code of Conduct specifies the way in which the School requires parents and others responsible for students to conduct themselves when visiting the School campus, participating in School activities, or otherwise engaging with members of our School community. Parents and guardians should set an example for their children, and the children of others.

This document sets out mandatory minimum standards of conduct: giving clear examples of acceptable, or positive conduct, and clear examples of minor breaches and serious breaches. These stand beside but do not exclude or replace the rights and obligations of individuals made under common law.

1. SCOPE

The Code of Conduct applies to all parents, guardians, step-parents, grandparents, extended family members and care-givers of students enrolled at the School, (in this document, ‘Parents and Guardians’) as well as any guests (including family and family friends) who accompany Parents and Guardians to School or School events.

This Code governs the way Parents and Guardians interact with and treat other Parents and Guardians, students (including their own), visitors, staff (including teachers), contractors and volunteers (in this document, ‘members of the School community’).

All Parents and Guardians must act in accordance with this Code, and consequences of any breach are set out under Section 5.

2. EXPECTATIONS OUTLINED IN THIS POLICY

2.1 Communication

Communication between the adults that are supporting the children may, at times, require that the adults provide or share sensitive information including elements that might involve the confidentiality of other children, or that may be confronting or challenging to express or hear. The following code outlines how to conduct this communication in a way that preserves the safety of staff and parents and works towards the best outcomes for students.

In order that all staff, contractors and volunteers can enjoy a safe and enjoyable work environment, Parents and Guardians must comply with the following:

(a) If a Parent or Guardian contacts a staff member, contractor, or volunteer in relation to a query or concern, the recipient will respond within a reasonable period (48 hours from receipt of communication),

(b) In order to effectively discuss a particular query or concern with a staff member, contractor, or volunteer (either in person or over the phone), Parents and Guardians must make an appointment in advance,

(c) Written correspondence with the School must be respectful and courteous and never abusive, vexatious, intimidating, threatening or bullying, or constitute sexual harassment.

2.2 Expected conduct in relationships: examples of parent conduct with staff and other parents and guardians

Please note: examples of conduct that constitutes a breach are in section 3.

2.2.1 Being Proactive

- Maintain a healthy parent-teacher relationship that is essential to promote a positive school experience for your child/ren.
- Hold others in unconditional positive regard, assume the best in others' intentions.
- Use accurate and kind words especially when speaking of another's challenges.
- Welcome, foster and renew connections to all new parents, staff and students regardless of background.
- Support belonging in our diverse community with inclusive language and actions.

2.2.2 Being Responsive and Supportive

- Seek understanding of situations with others through self-reflection and taking self-responsibility for your contribution to the current state of the situation.
- When providing feedback, follow the feedback and complaints policy.
- Keep an open mind to difference.
- Acknowledge that there are other valid points of view.
- Limit discussion of your concerns, other than following the feedback process, to sensitive and confidential discussion with a person somewhat independent of the school context, or in a context such as counsellor/psychology sessions.
- Hold an attitude of awareness that with conflict and problems, there are always different viewpoints, so this means you may never have a resolution that's fully in your favour, but you should be comfortable enough that your concerns have been recognised and a process of resolution has been followed.
- Participate in a restorative approach to disrepair in relationships.

2.2.3 Maintaining safety and boundaries

Hold boundaries around unsafe behaviours through appropriate mechanisms.

For example:

- If approached by someone with feedback about another person or school action/activity, direct them to the feedback process.
- As per the feedback process, avoid directly discussing feedback with someone if you feel heightened about the situation.
- If another person (staff or parent/guardian) appears to have heightened emotions when interacting with you, explain that you need to end the interaction and direct them to follow the feedback process for alternate pathways.

2.2.4 Bringing Feedback and Concerns

Follow our Feedback and Complaints Process including:

- Lodge feedback to assist improvements, or
- Lodge a clear complaint and request for preferred resolution.
- Engage consistently and in a timely way with the school to resolve the complaint.
- Maintain confidentiality throughout the process.
- Unless you are raising a further complaint, once a resolution has been reached according to the school's procedures, support the decisions and outcomes.

2.2.5 Making a Complaint

As advocates for your child, parents and guardians have the right to raise issues and concerns related to the education of their child or other matters relating to the School.

The School will take seriously any issues that are brought to its attention. If Parents or Guardians express their concerns to the School, they can expect to be treated with courtesy and respect in attempting to resolve the matter.

Tamar Valley Steiner School has a Feedback and Complaints Management Policy and Complaints against the Principal Procedure to ensure that all grievances are dealt with by the school appropriately.

The School's Feedback and Complaints Management Policy and Complaints against the Principal Procedure can be requested from the school office or found on the school website.

2.3 Expectations around Upholding the School's Purpose and Values

Parents and Guardians must support and act in accordance with the School's Mission and Core Values in all dealings with the School, including when referring to the School, directly or indirectly, on Social Media. For the purpose of this Code, the key parts of our Core Values are as follows:

- (a) The School is based on the Anthroposophical principles that guide the Pedagogical indications as given by Dr Rudolf Steiner.
- (b) The School strives at all times to build a culture of respectful interactions and positive student behaviours.
- (c) The School is committed to the principles and practice of Australian democracy, which includes the values of diversity, openness and tolerance.
- (d) The school seeks at all times to build restorative practices into the operation of the school that support the school's values of inclusion and having positive relationships whilst maintaining adherence to all legal requirements.

2.4 Expectations regarding adhering to protocols on School premises and at School events

2.4.1 Respecting the School's Policy and procedures

When attending the School or any School-related event, Parents and Guardians are required to:

- (a) Comply with all laws, policies and procedures in place at the School,
- (b) Report to the office if entering the school property for any reason at a time other than the normal pick up or drop off time for their child/ren,
- (c) Advise the School of any areas of potential conflict, such as parenting and family court orders,

- (d) Refrain from smoking on the School grounds, and in accordance with smoking regulations,
- (e) Dress appropriately according to the occasion; this includes avoiding wearing clothing with advertising, or offensive words,
- (f) Refrain from bringing alcohol or illicit drugs on to the School grounds; or to attend school grounds and events affected by illicit drugs or alcohol,
- (g) Be respectful and not damage School property and the property of others.

2.4.2 Respecting members of the School community

When attending the School or any School-related event, Parents and Guardians must:

- (a) Avoid raising feedback with staff in spontaneous moments, particularly at festivals, other than as recommended per the Feedback and Complaints procedure (1-minute chat if it is a simple matter and there is good rapport)
- (b) Treat all members of the School community (as defined above) with courtesy and respect,
- (c) Be courteous and respectful in all written and spoken communication with everyone in the School community,
- (d) Ensure that their actions and communications do not bring the School into disrepute,
- (e) Not use offensive, insulting or abusive language or expletives, or speak in a derogatory, vexatious or offensive manner,
- (f) Never use violence of any kind or engage in threatening behaviour towards anyone,
- (g) Not assault (sexually, physically, verbally or emotionally), harass, intimidate, undermine, threaten or bully any member of the School community,
- (h) Listen respectfully (in the same manner required by students and staff) when attending any kind of School assembly, activity, presentation, festival or other public event,
- (i) Ensure that any physical contact with students is appropriate given the age of and relationship with the student, such that questions of impropriety do not arise,
- (j) Not discipline or reprimand another person's child, raise their voice or get involved in verbal altercations with another parent or guardian or child; make an arrangement to discuss any concerns in an appropriate way and at a time suitable for both parties, or seek support to otherwise gain understanding and mutual respect,
- (k) Respect the privacy of other members of the School community. This includes not engaging in malicious or judgmental exchanges (either directly or online) and ensuring all speech about others is both fair and truthful
- (l) Not disparage the School's Mission or Core Values or otherwise act in a manner which is disrespectful or contradictory to the School's Anthroposophical based Educational principles,
- (m) Seek clarity on any aspect of the Schools Mission if there is insufficient understanding of the school's principles to support the School in word and deed,

2.4.3 Respecting staff, teachers, contractors and volunteers

In all interactions with staff, teachers, contractors and volunteers, Parents and Guardians must:

- (a) Only enter a classroom, staffroom, an unattended Office or attend a School-related activity with permission from a staff member,
- (b) When attending School or a School event in a voluntary capacity, accept the authority of the teacher (or staff member) and comply with any reasonable direction.

2.5 Confidential Use of Photography and Video

Parents and Guardians must not:

- (a) Take a photo or audio or video recording of any member of the School community without their consent (or, in the case of a student, the consent of their Parent or Guardian),
- (b) Share, distribute or post on social media any photo or audio or video recording of any member of the School community without their prior consent (or, in the case of a student that is not their own, the documented consent of their Parent or Guardian).

2.6 Use of Social Media

All members of the school community should recognise the potential for damage to be caused, directly or indirectly, to the School and to school community members and exercise thoughtfulness and care in the use of social media relating to the school.

When using social media, Parents and Guardians must therefore:

- (a) Be respectful and courteous to all members of the School community, and not act in a way that could sexually harass, bully or intimidate,
- (b) Not criticise the School's Mission, Values or Anthroposophical principles,
- (c) Not discuss or mention the School, its staff or any members of the School community in a negative or defamatory way, or otherwise break the law,
- (d) Not use the platform to voice grievances about the School,
- (e) Make contact with students (other than their own) using any form of social media,
- (f) Make reasonable efforts to ensure that their children comply with the School's Social Media Policy,
- (g) Never disclose the personal details of, or confidential information about, any member of the School community to third parties without the individual's prior consent or the consent of their Parent or Guardian,
- (h) Never post defamatory, offensive, sexually inappropriate or other material that may damage the reputation of the School or a member of the School Community.

3. Breaches of the Code of Conduct

The following outlines what would be considered a breach of this Code of Conduct. Because of the school's high standards of expectations of conduct which are required to support our unique culture (as outlined in the Rationale), it is possible to have a 'minor' breach if these high expectations are not fully adhered to. Any breach of the basic expectations of respect and minimum standards of conduct (2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5), and any significant breach will not be considered minor.

3.1 Conduct with staff, parents and students that is in breach of the Parent Code of Conduct

3.1.1 MINOR

- Withdrawing from communication with a teacher for an extended period (more than a month as a guide)
- Allow a situation of relationship disrepair to go on unaddressed.
- Continue to engage in situations with teachers, or other parents/guardians, where you feel escalated and may reach a state where you find it difficult or impossible to meet expectations of the code of conduct.
- Cause some minor or moderate harm to teachers, students or other parents/guardians by becoming heightened during an interaction and using words, action, or tone of voice that could be received as being harmful.
- Whilst avoiding directly bringing feedback or a complaint to the school, and instead:

- Share negative stories about others' with either staff or parents/guardians.
- Pass on negative stories you've heard about others without having personal knowledge of the full circumstances.
- Ask other parents about their experiences with an intent to try to get more negative information about a situation or staff member to support your perspective.
- Actively share or collect information from other parents with an intent to take legal action against the school or its staff, prior to lodging a complaint and having that complaint addressed using the school's procedures.
- Lose unconditional positive regard for another and continue to maintain this attitude.
- Use assumptions that take a negative stance of other people to inform your approach to them.
- Exaggerate or use inflammatory language about others.
- Vent by sharing raw, emotional, or unprocessed thoughts in an unfiltered way in a less than private space, or with others in the school community who may be affected by the way you share your story.
- Express negative statements about others directly or indirectly.
- Use harmful words about another community member directly or indirectly.
- Perpetuate negative thoughts and stories about people and situations that do not help progress a situation to a better outcome.
- Discriminate based on how aligned with 'Steiner' a person/family may be at any point in time. Judgement on background is not acceptable. Intent to embrace Steiner education, values and principles by families is required.
- Be critical of family values around food, technology etc in front of children (adults is still ok) – because of potential impact of shame or confusion for children about their family choices
- Agitate to ensure that your needs will be met despite negative impacts on others.
- When discussing feedback, taking a defensive stance, invalidating another person's point of view.
- Refuse to acknowledge responsibility for minor or moderate harm suffered connection with your actions even if unintended.
- Contribute directly or indirectly to a culture of preferential treatment or cliques.
- Actively establish an 'in group' while by noticeably excluding others.
- Being cold or dismissive with some members of the community, e.g. intentionally avoiding greeting, meeting someone's gaze, or avoiding speaking to others such as other parents in your child/ren's class/es while maintaining an obvious sense of warmth with others.

3.1.2 Serious

- Hold and express the belief that only certain types of people belong in our community.
- Demonstrate an inability to move forward with a situation to a positive space despite significant investment from the school to progress through and resolve a situation.
- Taking an overtly negative attitude towards another community member that they are directly aware of.
- Actively advocate or agitate to have a member of the school staff or community removed.
- Cause significant harm to a staff member, other parent or student by becoming heightened during an interaction and using words, action, or tone of voice that are received as being extremely harmful.
- Continue to share negative stories without using the complaints procedure or whilst in the middle of resolving a complaint.
- Breach confidentiality of the complaint process while engaged with complaints procedure.
- Consistent or significant (one-off) failure to follow appropriate procedures to manage boundaries around unsafe behaviours.
- Refuse to compromise or accept a resolution that is reasonable and fair in objective terms.

- Hold grudges against others without actively seeking resolution or working towards forgiveness of past actions.

4. NOTIFYING A BREACH OF THIS CODE

Any person may notify the Principal or the Business Manager of a possible breach of this Code of Conduct.

The Principal or their representative may then decide to investigate the complaint to determine whether there has been a breach of the Code of Conduct or other School policy or law.

5. ACTIONS AND SANCTIONS WHEN IN BREACH OF THIS CODE

If satisfied that a breach by a Parent or Guardian has occurred, the Principal or their representative may implement disciplinary action against the person. The sanction applied will be proportionate to the extent of the breach. Actions and sanctions include: a reminder of expectations, warning, direction to attend a mediated meeting, direction not to enter School grounds for a period of time, or other sanctions up to and including termination of the enrolment of the student under their care.

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