

Glossary

Parent Volunteer/Employee (P-VE) - parents in the Ringwood North PS community who are either employed by the school or assisting in a voluntary function as part of the learning program.

Purpose

This code of conduct is a local agreement intended for use by parents in the Ringwood North PS community who are either employed by the school or assisting in a voluntary function as part of the learning program. Its purpose is to ensure that trust, confidentiality and safety of all stakeholders is maintained at all times and that the correct procedure for addressing concerns is followed.

P-VE are expected to accept the code of conduct as part of the induction process, prior to commencing employment or volunteering at the school.

Parents volunteering infrequently or as part of a one-off event are not required to be inducted into this but should be aware of its contents and display behaviour consistent with its intentions. The school reserves the right to refuse the offer of volunteer assistance for those whose past conduct has been inconsistent with these values.

The contents do not overwrite any expectations or requirements outlined by the Department of Education and Training, Victorian Institute of Teaching or Department of Justice and Community Safety.

Expected Behaviour

01. P-VE are expected to respect the rights of all community members. In particular, stakeholders' rights to privacy, confidentiality and dignity are paramount and must be maintained.
02. Avoiding **Conflict of Interest (COI)**, including real and perceived is the responsibility of the P-VE and, when in doubt, a conservative approach to managing circumstances should be followed.
03. Respecting the **Confidentiality of private and sensitive information** is fundamental in maintaining trust within the community. Where the P-VE has access to private information about students, parents or staff, they must only engage in accessing and using this information to the extent that it is required to complete their allocated duties.
 - a. Likewise, after learning new information about a stakeholder in the course of their duties, it is then incumbent upon the P-VE to maintain the **right to privacy** of the individual and, beyond completing their allocated duties, share nothing that they have learnt through the course of their work.
04. Understanding that for many individuals the school environment provides a safe and secure environment and personal knowledge of an individual should not limit an individual's ability to maintain this. This means that prior knowledge of an individual or relationships (both positive and negative) formed outside of school must not be used to impact an individual's right to 'start fresh', **free from judgement**.

Student Interactions

Students at RNPS are the most vulnerable stakeholders at school and as such require the greatest protection from harm due to physical, mental and emotional distress. Staff and volunteers must always consider the short- and long-term impacts of their behaviour on children. As the adults in these interactions, the onus to regulate behaviour and protect the child rests always with the adult.

P-VE must:

05. Speak with children using appropriate language about appropriate topics.
 - a. Discussions about adult pursuits (pertaining to violence, illicit substances, alcohol and inebriation, adult media and any sexual topic) should not be engaged in with or around children. Even where a child may have been present at an event, for instance a BBQ or camping trip, discussions of these topics must be avoided. P-VE should use strategies of diversion to end the conversation or questioning by a child.
06. Avoid overly-familiar treatment that may be interpreted as 'favouring' one child over another.
 - a. Actions such as hugging or giving gifts may lead others to feel that the P-VE attention and compassion is greater for one person over another.
 - b. Extended discussions with one child or a group of children about events outside of school may similarly raise a perceived conflict of interest or feel exclusionary to other students.
 - c. Demonstrations of closeness - such as showing photos of a student at the family home or on holiday - may again cause other students to lose a sense of objectivity and trust the P-VE less.
 - d. Where a child regularly initiates overly-familiar interactions the P-VE may ask another staff member to assist them to discuss with the child alternative approaches. E.g. A high-5 in the morning to say hello instead of a big hug would be more appropriate and could be shared with more than just one child.
07. Build and maintain positive relationships with all students.
 - a. When working in a class or year level, all students are of equal importance and must be shown the same opportunity to experience joy, laughter, comfort and compassion.
 - b. Simple gestures of support and invitation help students to feel comfortable in the space. Smiling and greeting all students with equal interest and enthusiasm is important.
 - c. Where negative family relationships exist, it is imperative that this does not result in an adult treating a child differently or unfavourably. Likewise, demeaning comments directed at or about the child or their family are not appropriate.

Parent Interactions

P-VE are expected to:

08. Maintain a professional demeanour when interacting with all parents.
 - a. Focus on representing and supporting the best interests of all children at school and move beyond personal differences or past incidents in order to maintain this focus.
 - b. Speak professionally with, around and about children at all times. This includes refraining from passing judgement or speaking in a manner that may be construed as insulting, judgemental or inappropriate.
 - c. When discussing difficult topics with parents, demonstrate patience and empathy and provide reassurance that privacy and confidentiality will be maintained.
 - d. As a general rule, it is not appropriate to discuss a specific child's concerns with anyone but that child's parents or other educators for the purpose of better meeting that child's needs. If in doubt, all P-VE should defer to a member of school leadership.
 - e. When socialising outside school, P-VE should refrain from sharing details of what they see and hear in the classroom, playground or staffroom. Where other parents attempt to press for details, P-VE are encouraged to excuse themselves from the situation.
 - i. Any concerns arising from the P-VE activities should be expressed to school leadership through the appropriate channels and in accordance with the Complaints policy.

- ii. Any concerns arising as a parent of a child, should be expressed in accordance with the Complaints policy, clearly outlining that the P-VE is acting in their capacity as a parent and understanding that treatment and response to those concerns will be consistent with similar issues raised by other parents and not be different because of their role as a P-VE.

09. Maintain confidentiality of sensitive information.

- a. Depending on staff roles, P-VE may have access to or inadvertently learn information about staff, students or other parents. Regardless of whether this information has been communicated directly or indirectly, all personal information must be treated as private until it has been communicated publicly through the correct channels (generally via Compass or the newsletter).
- b. This includes, but is not limited to: medical conditions or diagnoses; pregnancy announcements; staff workforce planning; student behavioural issues; relationship changes; and financial matters.
 - i. Where parents at the school feel uncomfortable about addressing any issues related to financial hardship, they are encouraged to arrange a time with the business manager or Principal to discuss confidentially the supports that are available. These meetings and their outcomes are strictly private and no details are shared with other staff without your approval.

Staff Interactions

To maintain the supportive and collaborative staff environment at RNPS, P-VE are expected to:

10. Trust and respect the professionalism of their colleagues.

- a. Conclusions reached as a parent of a learner or via social interactions with other parents are unhelpful in maintaining effective collaborative relationships.
- b. Failure to collaborate effectively is seen as an underperformance issue.
- c. Personal disagreements or personality clashes are not a reasonable case for failing to collaborate effectively with colleagues.
- d. When socialising with staff, others are entitled to relax and be themselves without fear of their actions being reported to or shared with the community.
 - i. Sharing images or videos of others on social media is strongly discouraged (there are DET policy guidelines that restrict what employees can share.)
 - ii. Relating personal stories of others or sharing details of their life not publicly shared is also inappropriate.

11. Address concerns about your children through the appropriate measures.

- a. It can be seen as confrontation or intimidation to use the threat of a negative work relationship to effect change. When the correct processes are not followed, other staff may feel coerced into providing favourable treatment for you or your child in order to maintain the relationship.
- b. As a result, P-VE are expected to be conscientious about ensuring that there is no real or perceived conflict of interest.
 - i. P-VE should arrange a time to discuss their child's needs in private rather than raising these concerns unexpectedly and without forewarning.
 - ii. The easiest way to do this is either by talking with your child's teacher before or after school, or via email. All parents can request a time to talk with a teacher at any point in the year.
 - iii. Official school methods for parent reporting processes are the same for all parents and P-VE are not entitled to extra meetings or extra detail beyond that which is provided to all families.

Related Policies

- Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees ([Link](#))
- Conflict of Interest ([Link](#))
- Duty of Care ([Link](#))
- Child Safe Standards ([DET - Link](#)) ([School - Link](#))
- Child Safety Code of Conduct ([Link](#))
- Social Media ([Link](#))
- RNPS Statement of Values ([Link](#))

Ongoing Volunteer

Employee

Name _____

Signed _____

Date _____