



Coburg West Primary School

Classroom Helpers and Volunteers Information Handbook

We are Safe
We are Respectful
We are Learners
We Care about each other

Coburg West Primary School Helpers and Volunteers Information Handbook

At Coburg West Primary School we encourage parents/carers to actively support student learning by becoming involved in a range of school and classroom activities and greatly appreciate the parents/carers and community members who assist and support our programs. ***Your assistance is invaluable to us.***

Programs and activities may include:

- in the classrooms (eg. Reading, Writing, Maths, Oral Language, Inquiry)
- specialist classrooms
- Perceptual Motor Program (PMP)
- canteen
- Coburg West Community Group – various opportunities
- excursions
- School Council or School Council Working Parties/Sub Committees

Classroom Helpers and Volunteer Workers

When parents/carers assist with school programs they are classed as **volunteers** working at the school. Any person whose duties usually involve or are likely to involve work in a school (paid or unpaid) is considered to be engaged in 'child-related work' and must be compliant with the **Working with Children Act 2005**.

A duty of care applies while students are under the care of the school. This duty applies equally to school based activities and out of school activities. The same duty of care applies to employees and volunteers who assist at the school.

Classroom helpers/staff support/volunteer workers are expected to assist the programs within the following guidelines:

- Treat all students in a positive, impartial and fair manner.
- Work under the direction of the teacher who is responsible for the class or group of children.
- Refer any behaviour management issues to the classroom teacher, as he/she will then determine what course of action is to be followed.
- Operate within **professional standards** and **confidentiality**. Classroom helpers are in a position of trust and should not discuss with other parents, adults or children any personal information about students, staff or other classroom helpers learnt whilst involved in school programs.
- Obtain a **Working with Children Check** for volunteers, as they are considered to be engaged in 'child-related work' and must be compliant with the Working with Children Act 2005.
- Be willing to assist all children or group of children within the classroom. This could mean that you may not always work with your child.

Classroom Helper Procedures

Classroom helpers and Volunteers need to:

- provide the school with a Working with Children's Check.
- sign in and sign out of the School, via the electronic sign in point at the office
- wear a visitors pass while working in the school indicating to staff and students that they are allowed to be in the school.

Classroom Experiences

Classrooms are a hive of activity especially in our modern world where teaching practise is more focused than ever before on meeting individual needs. When you stand at the door of a classroom in the middle of a reading or a maths session, you'll see a variety of activities taking place.

Some students will be working by themselves, some in small groups, some in a small group with the attention of the teacher and sometimes (often at the end and the beginning of lessons) all the class will be together. Some children will be writing, drawing, making, some will be reading, some on computers or using technology and some using all sort of materials from toys to counters to calculators.

To make sure that learning is happening in our busy rooms, teachers need students to be 'on task' and to 'make good choices' and we do a lot of talking and setting up classroom rules and procedures to get this happening. Of course, you can see where an extra pair of adult hands, eyes and ears would help!

What you could be doing?

Parent/carer classroom helpers could be asked to:

- work with small groups of students on tasks that don't require direct teaching but may require an adult hand.
- working as a 'roamer' – patrolling the room and keeping everyone on task while the teacher is focusing on a small group
- helping students change Take Home Books (THB)
- helping students with their writing/maths/reading etc

Some strategies to use when working with children

Prevention

- Be prepared and understand the task that the teacher has asked you to support
- Ask the child who needs to focus to sit next to you.

Praise

- 'I like the way you sat down straight away'
- 'You did a great job of taking turns'

Redirecting

- 'Can you show me how you read your book?'
- 'Share with me what you have done so far'
- Tell 3 other students what they're doing well.

State expectations

- 'Ms Jones told us to start work immediately'
- 'We need to (eg. read independently, write now)'

REMEMBER: Discipline is the teacher's role, not yours.

Don't ever be afraid to send a child to a teacher!

Confidentiality

The most important gift children and their families give us is their trust. Children will talk about everything and anything. In fact it's often quite entertaining to hear their stories and opinions. However that very innocence means they have very little filter on what they say, so to protect their own and their family's confidentiality, the adults working with children almost need a 'what's said in the classroom, stays in the classroom' approach. Of course, if something said concerned you, please see the classroom teacher.

We also respect students by keeping their academic and social progress confidential. Each family has the right to expect that their child's progress, lack of progress, social difficulties, or their special needs are not shared around the school community. So we ask that you don't discuss with other parents or community members how children are progressing, how they compare to each other or any behavioural difficulties. Certainly, if you have concerns, make these known to the teacher.

Guidelines for Classroom Helpers and Volunteers

School Values

Know, understand and follow the school values:

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We Care about each other

The following guidelines are provided to support classroom helpers.

Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use encouraging/positive words• Adopt a pleasant tone of voice• Use warm, open body language
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set a good example eg. look at and listen to the teacher when he/she speaks• Give students opportunities for decision making by offering limited and appropriate choices eg. 'Which book would you like to read?'
Physical Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accept child initiated contact where appropriate eg. a child who high fives you• Redirect child initiated contact where that contact is inappropriate eg. a student who wants to cling to your leg as you walk around the classroom.• Discuss concerns about appropriate contact with the class teacher.
Dress Code	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wear appropriate clothing for anticipated role and activities and when in doubt ask.

Emergency Procedures

The School is committed to ensuring the safety, health and wellbeing of its staff, students, parents, volunteers and visitors. The School has an Emergency Management Plan in place. As a volunteer/parent helper it is your responsibility to familiarise yourself with the School's Emergency Management procedures. A summary of the school's Emergency Management Plans are located within the buildings throughout the school.

We perform Emergency Management drills at different times during the year. Ensure that you are aware of the processes for your classroom as well as the time that you may be in other areas of the school. e.g. Hall, Library etc. If you have any question please ask the teacher.

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

What name do the children use when addressing parent helpers in the classroom?

It depends, some parents like to be called by their first name (Mary, Peter) while others prefer to be addressed using their formal name (Mrs Brown, Mr White). The class teacher will normally discuss this with you. Whichever name is chosen, the most important factor is that the children speak to you with respect.

Where can I apply for a Working With Children Check, and how much does it cost?

Applications for a Working With Children's Check can be made at the local post office or online at <http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au> Applicants need to supply a passport photo with their application. There is no cost for a *Working With Children Check* for volunteers. Although it may take several weeks for a Working With Children Check to be processed, parents are able to be parent helpers once they have a receipt for their *Working With Children Check*.

What do I need to do when I arrive at school as a classroom helper/volunteer?

All visitors are asked to sign in via the electronic sign in point at the office. Please sign out again when you leave school.

Can I bring my toddler/baby with me when I help out in my child's class

We ask that classroom helpers/volunteers make alternative arrangements for their toddlers and babies so that our students can have your full attention and support. This will allow you and our students to maximise on their learning without distractions.

What is the usual time commitment for classroom helpers/volunteers in the classroom?

Individual class teachers and parent helpers jointly organise the time and type of support that best suits both parties. Typically parents volunteer 1 to 2 hours per week. The School appreciates any assistance classroom helpers and volunteers are able to provide.

What do I do if I am unable to make it to my weekly time?

Teachers appreciate it if you can let them know if you won't be available. Communication via a note, SEESAW, a phone call to the office (9386 1286) is appreciated. Teachers understand that there are many times when your routine will change.

I noticed that my friend's child is having a lot of trouble in reading. Should I talk to my friend about this?

As a classroom helper in the classroom you will see the various strengths and areas of need of all the students in the class. It is important that you respect each child's ability and confidentiality and if you have any concerns talk to the class teacher about them.

The classroom that I help out in is quite noisy at times. When I went to school the students worked in silence. Is it OK to have a noisy classroom?

Classrooms have changed a great deal. Students have many opportunities to work with other students, talk and discuss their learning. The teacher will monitor noise levels in the classroom to ensure they are suitable for the activity being undertaken at the time.

Who is responsible for classroom management in the classroom?

The classroom teacher is always responsible for classroom management. If you are assisting in a small group or individual situation and a student is behaving inappropriately, advise the classroom teacher. It is important for the students to know that the teacher is responsible for behaviour.

What if it is my child who is behaving inappropriately?

This is always a sensitive area. Some students react differently when their parent/carer is in the room. If possible, advise the classroom teacher at the time. If this behaviour continues speak to the classroom teacher out of class time to decide on the best course of action.

I can't help on a weekly basis but I would like to come into the classroom when I have odd days off work. Is this possible?

Teachers always appreciate extra help in the classroom. Where possible a little notice will allow the best use of your time.