SNOWY MOUNTAINS GRAMMAR SCHOOL

CHALLENGE **BELONG** EXPLORE

Parent Code of Conduct

Governance

Document Information

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Document Approval

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Summary

At Snowy Mountains Grammar School, we aim to provide an open, inclusive, welcoming, and safe environment for all. This *Parent Code of Conduct* has been developed so that parents and carers with parental responsibilities are aware of and meet the expectations of the School regarding interactions with other individuals when engaged in the context of the school community.

By all parents and carers adhering to and supporting this Code of Conduct, it further promotes the benefit of safe, positive, and productive relationships. Staff, service providers, volunteers and students all have a code of conduct and/or policies guiding acceptable standards of practice. It is appropriate that we also provide a guide for our parents and carers to support our community with a commensurate and consistent conduct standard. Together, these align to enable students and staff most particularly, to have a successful and positive day-to-day experience at Snowy Mountains Grammar School.

We believe that students benefit greatly from positive, productive, and respectful relationships and the SMGS community should all support and adhere to our core C.A.R.E. values promoted within our school environment:

COURAGE AUTHENTICITY RESPECT EMPATHY

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Rights

All school staff, students, parents and carers, service providers, volunteers and visitors have the right to be and feel safe within our school community at all times. Aggressive, and/or abusive, and/or threatening or similar behaviour/s will not at all be tolerated.

Responsibilities

The School is responsible for establishing and administering the policies, procedures, rules, and expectations which govern the day-to-day operations. It is important that parents (and others included in the definition of the Code) recognise and respect this, adhere to the requirements and support these decisions without causing operational interference.

The School reserves all rights to administer and operate the school including decisions regarding student behaviours, financial, teaching and learning, activities, uniforms and any other operational aspect of the School.

The School also has a legal duty of care to protect all staff and for this reason any inappropriate behaviour cannot, and will not, be tolerated.

A student's enrolment is conditional upon parents or guardians agreeing to this policy.

Definition

This Parent Code of Conduct and use of the term 'parent', extends and applies to all parents, stepparents, carers, grandparents, family members, family friends and other persons representing an enrolled child within the school context. This Code of Conduct includes on or offsite activities and via any means of communication.

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1 Interaction with Staff

1.1 Interaction with Staff

All school staff are entitled to a safe work environment. This is in the best interests of our children as well as staff themselves. Parents should therefore ensure that interactions with staff do not create unnecessary stress and anxiety and are not excessive in requests of staff taking them away from their core responsibilities to students. Parents are required to use courteous and acceptable written and spoken language in all communications with students, staff and other parents and members of the school community. No profane, insulting, harassing, aggressive, intimidating, threatening or otherwise offensive language or gestures or other acts may be used, insinuated, or intimated.

Our highest priority is safety and we require staff to be able to focus on the welfare and education of all children in the school. School staff are therefore not required to respond to emails and telephone calls instantaneously. If you do need to email, be aware that we strive to acknowledge or respond to emails within one (1) to two (2) business days where possible, acknowledging some teachers have all day teaching followed by evening activities with students on any given day. Teachers may be away on excursions, camps or other activities offsite and boarding staff have varied rosters with some shifts mid-week off roster. Responses are not expected outside normal working hours or during school holidays. An alternative is to contact Main Administration-Reception during business hours.

The time available for parents to meet with staff is limited and must be scheduled at a time that does not disrupt the learning of students. Parents should be mindful of the teacher's time, communicate the reason for the meeting and allow the teacher time to prepare, unless there is a genuine emergency that needs to be discussed. There is no obligation for staff to meet a parent who has arrived at the School insisting on a meeting without notice.

At all times, the privacy of staff must be respected when out of school. Staff must be contacted by parents through the official school channels and not accessed privately (i.e. at home, personal phone, private email) for any school-related matters and never have their private details published or provided to other persons without direct individual written permission.

1.2 Interactions Generally

Communications either verbal or in writing with other members of the school community whether any school staff, other parents or students should:

- show respect, courtesy and consideration;
- not harass or bully another person;
- not use intemperate language; and
- not be confrontational, aggressive, intimidating or threatening in any way.

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1.3 Student Discipline

The School expects students to comply with its rules and not engage in behaviour which is harmful to others or is contrary to the ethos and philosophy of the School. Parents are expected to support the School in relation to its discipline policy and not do anything which undermines its authority. It must be understood that in the case of minor disciplinary matters, the School will be the arbiter of what took place and what is a fair punishment.

The School will not engage in debate about the details of the conduct for the appropriateness of the punishment.

In relation to more substantial disciplinary matters which may result in suspension or expulsion, the School will inform parents of the matter and will deal with it in accordance with the School's disciplinary policy. The School will strive to ensure procedural fairness principles are part of any investigation or process to occur. While parents will be consulted, the final decision will be the School's.

1.4 Communication on Digital Media, Online Conduct & Filming

Digital & Social Media Conduct

Parents have the right to raise concerns or lodge grievances through official school channels as detailed in the Grievance Policy. Social media, public forums, and online review platforms are not appropriate channels for resolving concerns.

Parents must not use social media or digital platforms - including public posts, personal profiles, online review sites, or unofficial parent group chats (e.g., WhatsApp, Messenger, Facebook class groups) - to:

- Publicly criticise school policies, operations, staff, school community members.
- Engage in defamatory, harassing, intimidating, or denigrating comments about any member of the school community.
- Create websites, social media pages (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter) or WhatsApp), channels, or blogs that represent or use the branding/name of Snowy Mountains Grammar School without prior written authorisation from the Principal.

Photography, Filming & Privacy

Photos and recordings taken at school events are for personal family use only. To respect student privacy and child safety standards:

- Parents must not publish, post, or share online images or videos featuring other children without the explicit consent of those children's parents.
- Where photos are shared publicly, parents are asked to crop out other identifiable students and avoid tagging or naming students.
- Photography and video recording are strictly prohibited in private areas, including boarding house quarters, change rooms, and confidential meetings, unless expressly permitted by the School.
- Filming of school performances or copyrighted material may be restricted in accordance with commercial intellectual property agreements.

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1.5 Parents & Friends Association

The Parents & Friends Association (P&F) is a valued volunteer body that operates in collaboration with the Principal and the School Board. The highly valued Charter for the SMGS Parents and Friends Association, is to principally raise funds for school-student benefit projects as volunteers and additionally use the association as a vehicle to promote social opportunities for parents of the School.

To enable the P&F to focus on fundraising and support for school-student benefit projects, the P&F does not become involved in the management of grievances or influence school operations in any way. For concerns, complaints or grievances, contact relevant school staff who can assist with any of these enquiries.

For more information on the P&F Association refer to the school website.

1.6 Communication with other Parents

Parents will respect the privacy of other parents in person and through other communication means. This includes not sending unsolicited emails to school parents or forwarding unsolicited emails that they receive to other parents. Parents will not forward other parents' email addresses or personal details without their permission. Parents provide their email address to the school to receive communications from the School about school related matters and their child. The School will not give out the email address or details of parents to other parents without direct permission.

Parents who act as volunteers in the School such as the P&F, in-class support (parents should remain mindful of confidentiality if assisting in a classroom environment, e.g. disclosing a student's reading ability etc), parent representatives or for specific fundraising or social events, are valued volunteers who play an important role in our community and commit a great deal of time for the benefit of all. Apart from the general principles that always apply, parents should be particularly sensitive about the way they provide feedback and ask questions of hardworking volunteers.

Parents will not approach another parent's child with the intention to reprimand them or negotiate conditions of peer interaction. If a parent is concerned about specific interactions of other children, they must direct their concern to the classroom teacher or a suitable school leader such as Head of Junior, Middle and Senior School. Parents must not approach another parent to complain about their child's interactions whilst on school premises.

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2 Families

2.1 Separated Families

Where a student has parents that are separated or divorced, parents or extended family/friends should not attempt to involve the School in any parental or family dispute that may exist or arise. The School cannot make judgements on the merits of claims made by one parent against another and should not be asked to do so, nor take any action which would disadvantage one party. The School will observe any orders made by a Court in relation to a student in relation to schooling where it remains current. Parents are obligated to ensure Court Orders are kept current for the School to observe.

The School aims to support children and their families and not impede their relationships. When requested and arranged, the School will provide one copy to each separated parent of the child's end of term/semester reports. General information provided to parents can be set up to be accessed by both parents upon request. Permission for a child to enter any co-curricular activity is only required by one parent, not both; however, should one parent object to the activity involvement in writing, the School may be obligated to deny the student's involved to occur in such a circumstance where a contradiction is communicated unless otherwise resolved and agreed in writing. We encourage parents to avoid this and to come to agreement beforehand as it is the child who is most affected. If conflicted, the School may elevate the child's needs above either or both parents at its discretion and take into consideration circumstances such as their age and overall acute safety.

2.2 Child Protection

Under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW), all teachers and certain school staff are mandatory reporters and must report to the Department of Communities and Justice Child Protection as soon as practicable if they have reasonable grounds to suspect a child or young person is at risk of significant harm, including sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect, exposure to domestic violence, or serious psychological harm, providing the child's name or description and reasons for their concern.

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3 Co-Curricular Activities and School Events

Parents are welcome and encouraged to attend many of the School's co-curricular events and are asked to reinforce a positive and healthy attitude towards their child's participation by demonstrating a supportive and disciplined approach to events, competitions, and activities. Parents should never direct comments to students, staff, officials, or other event staff that are derogatory, abusive, threatening or intimidating and other guidance consistent with the contents of this Code of Conduct applies. Some school activities, excursions, camps, tours only allow parent presence upon invitation.

The School retains the absolute right to ask any parent to immediately leave the school activity on or offsite where behaviour becomes unacceptable to the School (refer to this policy for details).

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4 Boarding House

Unless otherwise advised, parents are welcome in the Boarding House to visit with their child/ren for short periods of time, though are never to stay overnight. All parents will sign into the Boarding House through REACH, our boarding program. Parents should only visit during times that support the routines of the House. This is usually between 4 pm-6 pm Monday-Friday, or at suitable times on weekends.

Parent visits with their children should be in shared or common areas only. Parents may only enter their child's bedroom for a specific purpose such as moving items in/out which is normally on the first or last day of each term. The bedroom is not a suitable place for parents to visit their children otherwise. At all other times, visits will be away from the residences and in more suitable common areas.

It is essential that all parents respect the privacy of other residents of the House and never enter another student's room without a staff member.

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5 Alcohol and Illicit Substances

The School reserves the right to ask any parent who appears to be intoxicated or under the influence of a substance affecting the school event or activity in any way to cease involvement and to depart without delay, whether on or off campus.

Where a staff member believes that a parent or any other person collecting a child in a motor vehicle is under the influence of alcohol or illicit substances, the School instructs the staff member to require the child to remain with the staff member (without the use of any force), until suitable transport is arranged. A mandatory report to the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) is also very likely to be made. If the child is forcibly taken by the parent or other person, the staff member will call the Police without delay in the interests and duty of care to keep the child as safe as possible.

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6 Breach of this Code of Conduct

Any staff member or parent may report a possible breach of this Code of Conduct to the Principal, Deputy Principal or Heads of Junior or Middle/Senior School who will investigate the complaint. Where a breach is found to have occurred which impacts on the School's duty of care to students or staff, or adversely and unreasonably affected other members of the school community, the following outcomes may be enacted:

- In cases deemed to be minor, a warning may be issued that further breaches will not be tolerated and may have further consequences
- Restriction of communication away from staff members to instead go via a single nominated school representative, and for any specified period
- Exclusion of entry to the school grounds for any purpose, and for any period
- While it is standard practice in independent school enrolment contracts to reserve the right to expel a student for parental misconduct, doing so without advance notice can severely compromise the school's commitment to procedural fairness mentioned earlier in the document. If challenged, a court of the school registration authority may view a zero-notice expulsion as a breach of natural justice or a breach of the original commercial enrolment contract. This clause should ideally be cross-referenced with the school's formal Conditions of Enrolment to ensure they do not contradict on another.

Parents acknowledge and fulfil this responsibility when they:

- Have access to the Parent Code of Conduct, Enrolment Agreement, other Terms and Conditions, and other relevant school policies on the website
- Encourage, assist, and support their child in maintaining the highest standards of behaviour at school when involved in school activities
- Work positively and productively with the School staff in dealing with concerns or behavioural issues involving their child or another parent's child
- Recognise that the School is a complex learning and social environment involving countless interactions among individuals in communal relations and therefore, the perspective of one individual in any interaction is just one version of the occurrence and that other versions may also exist.

The School extends appreciation all parents supporting and adhering to this Code of Conduct.

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