

Volunteering at Mount Mee State School



Volunteers at Mount Mee State School are highly valued and offer a great range of services to our school including; literacy and numeracy support in the classrooms, working in our tuckshop, helping out at working bees and leading or supporting projects run by our P&C Association. No matter the type of support offered by volunteers within our school, it is important to keep our volunteers well informed of their role in ensuring the safety of children at Mount Mee State School.

Volunteers within all state schools are required to operate within the Student Protection Policy, Code of Conduct and DETE Standard of Practice. There are several main behaviours that are expected of all of volunteers while within the school grounds.

Demonstrating confidentiality

Acting in the best interest of students at all times

Making decisions ethically

Working with Children Check

While parents of students within the school are not required to hold a Queensland Working with Children Check (Blue Card), it is encouraged. All other family and community volunteers within the school are required to hold a valid blue card. This can be arranged free of charge through the school.

To assist volunteers in operating appropriately at Mount Mee State School, please review the two enclosed flyers on Student Protection and Ethical Decision Making. If you require further information about Student Protection, Code of Conduct and the DETE Standard of Practice, please contact the Principal on 5433 5333.

Department of Education and the Arts
SMS-PR-012: Student Protection
Student Protection Fact Sheet

Student protection involves:

- working to make schools safe and supportive places;
- taking action to prevent students being harmed at school; and
- reporting any suspicion you have that a student has been harmed or may be at risk of harm

All children have a right to be protected from harm.

Harm is:

Any detrimental effect of a significant nature to the child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused.

This means anything that will have a serious and harmful effect on a student's physical health, or how they think and feel about themselves.

Any behaviour that harms a student is wrong. Sometimes a culture may have a custom or practice that harms children. Education Queensland policy says that harm to students will not be tolerated. It is **NOT OK**. In other words, culture or custom is **NO EXCUSE** for harming students.

Everyone who works in a school must look after the best interests of children.

Managing your own behaviour is the first step in student protection

- NEVER harm a student, either physically, psychologically or emotionally
- NEVER make fun of a student, put them down or discriminate against them because of their race or religion
- NEVER touch a student in a sexual way, or engage in any other inappropriate sexual activity (for example, sending suggestive text messages or showing a student pornography)
- NEVER do anything that would make people think you are doing something sexual to a student

You must report, to the Principal, any harm to a student that is caused by:

- someone working at the school
- another student
- someone from the student's family, a friend or a stranger
- the student self-harming

If you see harm occurring at school:

1. **Help** the student who has been harmed, for example,
 - by telling the students to move away
 - get a staff member involved as soon as possible
2. **Tell the principal** straight away about what you have seen
3. **Write** down what you saw and give the information to the Principal.

If you suspect a student has been harmed at school or outside of school:

1. **Tell the principal** straight away about what you suspect
2. **Write** down what you suspect and give the information to the Principal.

If a student tells you that they have been harmed at school or outside of school:

1. **Listen** carefully
2. **Reassure** the student that they have done the right thing by telling you
3. **Tell the student** you must tell the Principal what they have told you
4. **Tell the principal** straight away about what the student told you
5. **Write** down what the student told you and give the information to the Principal.

If you suspect the Principal is responsible for causing harm to a student report this to the Executive Director, Schools at the local district office.

The main thing to remember is: If you suspect a student might have been harmed or might be at risk of harm tell the Principal straight away. If the Principal isn't available you must tell the Acting Principal or a Deputy Principal.

ETHICAL

Decision-making model

Recognise a potential issue or problem

Recognise a potential issue.
What is the issue or problem with this behaviour?
Examine the situation.
Is there more than one obvious problem with this behaviour, or is there more I need to consider? What is the context of the situation?

Find relevant information

Find facts and gather evidence.
What does the Code of Conduct say? Do I need to find out more information?

Liaise and consult

Liaise and consult with peers and supervisors.
Should I talk to someone about this? What behaviour is expected of me? Has this been done before?

Evaluate the options

Evaluate the options.
What is the best thing to do based on the information I've found? What are the risks? If someone finds out about my decision, what will they think?

Come to a decision

Come to a decision.
Do I need to get permission to do what I want to do? Have I recorded my actions?

Take time to reflect

Take time to reflect.
Am I happy with my decision? Would I do the same thing next time?

Where can I find out more?

Apart from reading the Code of Conduct and the Standard of Practice, we are encouraged to discuss issues with our manager or supervisor. We can also search for policies and procedures for guidance. Talk to a manager who has the relevant content expertise (eg. HR Manager or Finance Manager).

Code of Conduct training

Preventive measures such as ethical decision making and Code of Conduct awareness training supports the integrity of the department and provides staff with a greater understanding of how their actions make a critical difference in setting the standard for how we conduct ourselves as public officials.

The Ethical Standards Unit provides a variety of training initiatives to assist. Check out our web page or contact us via telephone for further information.

Assistance and advice

Ethical Standards Unit
Department of Education and Training
Level 16
Education House
30 Mary Street
PO Box 15033
City East QLD 15033

Tel: 07 3237 0255
Fax: 07 3235 9996

Email: ethicalstandards@deta.qld.gov.au

Deciphering the Code of Conduct

A guide
to
ethical
decision -
making

What is the Code of Conduct?

The *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994* defines four ethics principles and the underlying values that support these principles. The Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service and the department's Standard of Practice outline these principles and values which are all designed to provide a clear understanding of the standards of conduct expected of public officials.

All employees are required to read the Code of Conduct and Standard of Practice and to develop an understanding of the ethical principles, values and standards of conduct that support our daily work within the department.

As public officials, we are expected to maintain high personal integrity and to be accountable for our actions and decisions. Although the Code of Conduct and Standard of Practice do not detail courses of action for every likely work-related situation, they provide guidance to assist us when making ethical decisions during the course of our employment.

What are the ethics principles in the Code of Conduct?

Ethics principles are essential to the integrity and accountability of the department and fundamental to the ethical behaviour of public officials. Each principle is strengthened by a set of values which help describe the behaviour that will demonstrate each principle.

- Integrity and impartiality
- Promoting the public good
- Commitment to the system of government
- Accountability and transparency

The Code expands on these principles and values by establishing standards for conduct that show how we can put the principles and values into practice.

Does the Code of Conduct apply to me?

Yes. The Code applies to all employees of the department, whether permanent, temporary or casual. If we exercise authority or control resources on behalf of the department - even as a volunteer, agent, member of a board or committee, delegate or decision-maker - we need to be aware of the expectations of behaviour under the Code.

As public officials, we hold a special position of trust. The Code provides all of us with a framework to help guide us in how our work is performed, our professional standards and how we should conduct our relationship with others.

When does the Code of Conduct apply to me?

The Code applies at all times, when performing our work duties. However, it is important to note that it can apply if our personal

conduct is inappropriate or improper and reflects seriously and adversely on the public service.

As public officials - and perceived as such by the community - we have a responsibility to conduct ourselves in a manner that will not undermine public confidence in the integrity of the department.

The Ethical Standards Unit homepage, the Code of Conduct and Standard of Practice can easily be accessed via "Quick Links" on the One Portal

What are the risks for us if we don't apply the Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service when performing our duties?

The department promotes an ethical culture across the organisation both in practice and when making decisions.

By applying the Code in the workplace we create a positive work environment for all employees and ensure a positive reputation with other government departments, organisations and the community.

Individual behaviour influences the look and feel of our organisation and our ability to achieve our goals.

If inappropriate behaviour does occur within the workplace we are asked to explain why.

If the behaviour is assessed as unacceptable we may face a range of disciplinary actions.

Applying the Code minimises inappropriate behaviour and helps us to personally and professionally support the department's values and goals.

When making a decision ask yourself.....

- Which of the four ethics principles apply?
- How would it look on the front page of the morning paper?
- Would you still take the same action if it was your business, money, time or equipment?