



# VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

*Preparing the individual to make a world of difference*

# VOLUNTEERS AT TREETOPS

At Treetops, we treat each child with respect and endeavour to instil in our children a sense of inner discipline and responsibility for their own behaviour. We recognise that education is not just something that happens at school. Every experience a child has, good or bad, is a learning experience. The success of Treetops' philosophy therefore depends very much on compatibility between school and home life. Treetops recognises that the parent/guardian is the most important person in the child's life and the school aims to create a partnership in which parents are involved in their children's education.

Parents are invited to assist with a variety of activities within the classroom – for example, cooking, craft and accompanying children on excursions. Assisting within the classroom has many benefits - parents gain valuable insight into their child's day at Treetops, teachers develop a closer relationship with parents and, most importantly, our children benefit both directly from the activities and from the joy of having their parent participate in their classroom.

We rely on the community spirit at our Busy Bees, and our parents' desire to share their specific set of skills with the school community. To assist in the ongoing development of the community spirit, the Parents and Friends Committee was created. All parents and guardians with children enrolled at Treetops automatically become members of the P&F. You all have special skills that can benefit our school – please don't wait to be asked; your offers of help are always appreciated.

## SCHOOL VOLUNTEER POSITIONS

In general, a volunteer school worker is a person who voluntarily engages in school work without payment or reward. This may be across a range of areas or functions of the school.

### **Parent Liaisons**

Each class is assigned a Parent Liaison, chosen by the school management in agreement with the class teacher. The Parent Liaisons are coordinated by their class teachers and listed in Little Twigs at the beginning of the year. The job of the Parent Liaison is to spread the word about school social events, welcome new parents, help them to settle in and provide information and assistance to all parents. Parent Liaisons abide by the Parent Liaison Policy which is available on the website and should, at all times, be welcoming and helpful.

### **Class Volunteering**

It is an important part of a Montessori education that children see the school environment as their learning environment and metaphorically, parents hand over care of their child from themselves / their home environment to the class teacher / school learning environment. It is often a wonderful experience for a child to see their parent assisting at the school. This partnership is an important part of our culture and ethos. It is also true however that part of building independence and resilience in students is to allow student development to occur without the perception of parent supervision. Therefore, parent involvement in the classroom must be carefully planned with a specific purpose. Class volunteering typically occurs in three forms:

#### One off assistance:

In this form, parents/carers typically sign up to assist in an activity in the classroom as part of the advertised teacher roster. This may be for one or more occasions, but is normally at a specified time slot. Examples include: special lunch, providing arts/craft activity, small group reading or other 'help' programs.

This form of assistance will normally occur in the child's classroom and may include activities in which their own child participates. Each teacher coordinates their needs and may utilise Parent Liaisons for assistance in ideas and filling of rosters.

### Excursion or Camp:

From time to time parent assistance is required / sought on school excursions or camps.

This may allow us to provide a 'richer experience' by running additional or smaller groups for activities. It may also allow the school to meet required ratios without employment of additional staff, thus keeping costs down. Whilst many parents want to attend excursions (particularly in Lower Primary) the teacher will normally be clear that an assistant is needed to provide a better experience for all students not so that a parent can undertake an experience with their own child. This may result in a volunteer accompanying a group where their child needs extra supervision assistance or assisting with a 'different group' from their own child. The role of the volunteer may need to differ throughout the day.

Selection of volunteers may be influenced by the need to foster a child's confidence or independence which varies based on many factors, including the form of the activity, the degree of difficulty of the activity, and the experiences of the child. This is a decision of the class teacher.

### Block assistance:

In this form, the volunteer is typically acting as a classroom assistant, usually on a timetabled basis for a set period of time. In this role, the volunteer works under the direction of the teacher and may work with single or small groups of students. Work may be within the volunteer child's classroom, however, it is often desirable that volunteer assistants do not work with their own child or that they work in a different year level class to their own child. We do not want children to feel that parents are directly judging or monitoring their child's classroom practice or the child's performance.

In block assistance, the role of the volunteer may be coordinated in liaison with the Enrichment Coordinator. The Enrichment Coordinator is in charge of enrichment programs and will monitor the role in consultation with the teacher or may have a specific program of support that we wish to have implemented. Volunteers may bring in a specific skill that is utilised, or may be used for a specific purpose which the volunteer may or may not have experience with.

- Volunteers should not comment on a teacher's program /actions since they are not acquainted with the 'whole picture'.
- Volunteers must refrain from discussing classroom matters outside the classroom with other parents or the wider community.
- Volunteers must not engage in discussion with anyone other than the teacher regarding confidential information about a student's learning abilities/ program / behaviour.
- Volunteer time is not the right time to discuss their own child with the teacher.
- Volunteers should not engage in disciplining a child (although they may be expected to maintain group 'order' on camps and excursions).
- Volunteers should refrain from making judgemental comments to a student.

### Project Volunteers

These typically include parents working as part of a group of other parents (without teacher supervision) and may be coordinated via the office or school administration. They can take a range of forms such as:

### Busy Bees

The school periodically seeks or welcomes parent assistance to assist in school grounds projects. Any volunteer must be aware of normal work health and safety practice and wear suitable clothing or other safety equipment as determined by the job (e.g. enclosed shoes, eye and ear protection).

Examples may include volunteers helping on a building project, with 'grounds clean up', or overseeing a maintenance of a e.g. an herb garden.

### Library Care

A volunteer who may attend weekly or fortnightly for a block of time to maintain the library. E.g. book cataloguing, returns etc.

Parents may also act in a volunteer support capacity at the school via their involvement in groups such as:

### **School Board**

The Beenong School Association Board of Governance (“The Board”) is made up from elected members of the Association and external community members. The Board has three office bearers: Chairperson; Vice-Chairperson; and Secretary. These positions are open for election every twelve months at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). The role of the School Board is to ensure that Treetops Montessori School has, and meets, clearly established goals and that Treetops’ Mission, Vision and Values are sustained. The Board’s job is to map a future and ensure compliance, thus guaranteeing the protection and enhancement of that future. Board members should be willing to challenge and explore assumptions, directions, and outcomes. The Board meets twice each school term. Board members agree to the Board Directors’ Code of Conduct. They are bound by legal and confidentiality parameters.

### **Parents and Friends Committee**

The Parents and Friends Committee (P&F) is made up of all parents and guardians who are part of the school community. The P&F has three office bearers, Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary. These positions are open for election every twelve months with re-election to current positions available as desired. The P&F reports directly to the School Board and Principal as a sub-committee of the School Board. The role of the P&F is to assist in the ongoing development of the greater school community through the organisation of family events, busy bees, and directed fundraising initiatives. The P&F meets twice each school term with meetings open to all members of the Beenong School Association.

## **VOLUNTEER INDUCTION AND SCREENING**

All volunteers for Treetops Montessori School must complete a short induction process that introduces them to the school and their direct workplace.

This handbook forms information and an introduction to the expectations of Treetops as part of the Volunteer induction process.

There may also be school or class specific information, requirements of their task and knowledge of the functions of the school which volunteers must be aware of as part of volunteering at the school. If required, this will be provided by the class teacher or school organiser as appropriate to the task.

Volunteers, who are regular class volunteers, or are on class excursions, are required to fill out a confidential declaration stating that they understand the role and requirements of the task and stating whether or not they have any criminal convictions or circumstances that might preclude them from working with children. In addition, volunteers who attend overnight camps are required to complete a Working with Children Check.

### **Working with Children Checks**

In compliance with the Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004, Treetops Montessori School requires all its staff, and any adult (who is not a parent) doing unsupervised volunteer work which brings them into contact with students, to have applied for a Working with Children (WWC) Card. Other volunteers do not need to have a WWC Check and should not apply for one. This includes volunteers and students on unpaid placement who are under 18 years; employers of children and people who work alongside children as fellow employees; parents volunteering in connection with their child’s activity (this exemption does not apply to other relatives or guardians nor to parents volunteering in connection with overnight camps); short-term visitors to WA, for two weeks after their arrival, and for no more than two weeks in any period of 12 months.

All visitors to classrooms, including parents, who will be working with children must sign the Administration’s visitors book. The Visitors Book is at the front reception desk in the school office. If volunteering is occurring out of normal office hours, then the activity or attendance must be pre-approved by the school office / administration.

# VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT

Contractors, consultants, and volunteers working with the school must be aware of the school's Code of Conduct and to behave in a manner consistent with the conduct requirements described in it (full details are available from the office). Behaviour that is not consistent with the conduct set out in this Code may result in the engagement of a contractor, consultant, or volunteer being terminated.

## **Summary:**

Treetops Montessori School welcomes community participation and values its input.

- We expect all members of the Treetops community, including parents and guardians, to demonstrate our values, profiles, and attitudes within the school setting. You represent the school whilst carrying out your duties and it is expected that you dress and conduct yourself in a manner suitable to the occasion. Volunteers are required to consider occupational health and safety standards for clothing / equipment, when conducting duties. Volunteers are required to adhere to good SunSmart practice, when outdoors.
- All children, staff, and parents have the right to feel safe at school. There may be times when you feel that the actions of another child or community member has infringed on your own or your child's rights. Under no circumstances is a parent / carer to approach another child whilst they are in the care of the school to discuss or chastise because of perceived actions towards their own child. Such an approach may be seen as an assault on the child and may incur legal consequences.
- Bullying behaviour has no place at Treetops and will not be tolerated. This is true for adult-to-adult, adult-to-child and child-to-child interactions.
- Behaving in an aggressive and/or threatening manner towards staff is **not** acceptable. All interactions between members of our community must be in keeping with the school's values.
- The language and how we conduct ourselves must always be conservative in the presence of young children, within the school grounds.
- Always approach any situation in a spirit of cooperation, understanding, and genuine partnership.

## **We attempt to resolve concerns through:**

- Calm discussion between the parties directly involved whilst respecting the dignity of each and every person;
- Actively listening to another point of view.

## **If the concern centres on the classroom or curriculum:**

- The first contact should always be with the classroom or specialist teacher by arranging a mutually convenient appointment;
- If a resolution is not reached, then it is appropriate to involve the Primary Coordinator, Secondary Coordinator, Student Learning Coordinator, or Principal with the aim of reaching a fair and peaceful resolution.

Please Note: Volunteers who breach this Volunteer Code of Conduct will be subject to action by the school.

# OBLIGATIONS OF VOLUNTEERS

For Treetops, a volunteer's most important responsibility relates to their duty of care to children and maintaining a safe school environment. Respecting the rights of children means they should not:

- Work unsupervised with students.
- Be involved in toileting students or assisting with sickrooms.
- Normally be involved in assisting with change rooms, unless in rare situations when directly requested by the supervising teacher e.g. swimming lessons, when the supervising teacher is also present.
- Have unsupervised contact with students during break times.
- Encourage affection from or dependency in students e.g. by giving presents.
- Have intentional physical contact with students [the supervising teacher should provide comfort/first aid to a distressed student].
- Display bullying or intimidating behaviours towards students.

Therefore, volunteers **should**:

- Refer all student concerns or behaviour issues to their supervising teacher.
- Refer all requests to access school files to their supervising teacher.
- Sign the school's visitor book for volunteers on arrival and departure.

Along with these requirements, Treetops Montessori School expects and requires certain obligations from all volunteers including:

- An understanding that all children learn differently and have different strengths. All staff aim to positively build on these different skills.
- Respecting confidentiality and privacy.
- Reliability.
- That each volunteer will carry out the volunteer position that was agreed.
- Accountability for the tasks given.
- A commitment to working for the school.
- A willingness to undertake training as required.
- A recognition of limitations and a willingness to ask for help and support when needed.
- Being supportive of the teacher / other volunteers and an ability to work as part of a team.
- Being prepared to follow all relevant school policies and procedures.
- Volunteers giving adequate notice before they leave the organisation.
- Volunteers must sign in and out from the school office.

## VOLUNTEER DECLARATION - CONFIDENTIAL

All paid and unpaid staff, including volunteers, interns or trainees of Treetops Montessori School are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people who engage with Treetops Montessori School. Volunteers are expected to act in accordance with this Code of Conduct in their physical and online interactions with children and young people under the age of 18 years.

<b>I will:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Act in accordance with Treetops Montessori School's child safety &amp; wellbeing policies and procedures at all times.</li> <li>Behave respectfully, courteously and ethically towards children, their families and towards staff.</li> <li>Listen and respond to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they communicate (verbally or non-verbally) that they do not feel safe or well.</li> <li>Promote the human rights, safety and wellbeing of all children at Treetops Montessori School.</li> <li>Demonstrate appropriate personal and professional boundaries.</li> <li>Consider and respect the diverse backgrounds and needs of children.</li> <li>Create an environment that promotes and enables children's participation and is welcoming, culturally safe and inclusive for all children and their families.</li> <li>Involve children in making decisions about activities, policies &amp; processes that concern them wherever possible.</li> <li>Contribute, where appropriate, to Treetops Montessori School policies, discussions, learning and reviews about child safety and wellbeing.</li> <li>Identify and mitigate risks to children's safety and wellbeing as required by Treetops Montessori School's risk assessment and management policy or process.</li> <li>Respond to any concerns or complaints of child harm or abuse promptly and in line with Treetops Montessori School policy and procedure for receiving and responding to complaints.</li> <li>Report all suspected or disclosed child harm or abuse as required by relevant legislation and by Treetops Montessori School policy and procedure on internal and external reporting.</li> <li>Comply with Treetops Montessori School protocols on communicating with children.</li> <li>Comply with relevant legislation and Treetops Montessori School policies and procedures on record keeping and information sharing.</li> </ul>
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<b>I will NOT:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage in any unlawful activity with or in relation to a child.</li> <li>Engage in any activity that is likely to physically, sexually or emotionally harm a child.</li> <li>Unlawfully discriminate against any child or their family members.</li> <li>Be alone with a child unnecessarily.</li> <li>Arrange personal contact, including online contact, with children I am working with for a purpose unrelated to Treetops Montessori School activities.</li> <li>Disclose personal or sensitive information about a child, including child images, unless the child &amp; their parent / guardian consent or unless I am required to do so by Treetops Montessori School policy &amp; procedure on reporting.</li> <li>Use inappropriate language in the presence of children, or show or provide children with access to inappropriate images or material.</li> <li>Work with children while under the influence of alcohol or prohibited drugs.</li> <li>Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child harm or abuse.</li> </ul>
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<b>If I think this Code has been breached by another person at Treetops Montessori School I will:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Act to prioritise the best interests of children.</li> <li>Take actions promptly to ensure that children are safe.</li> <li>Promptly report any concerns to the School Principal or their delegate.</li> <li>Follow Treetops Montessori School policies &amp; procedures for receiving / responding to complaints and concerns.</li> <li>Comply with legislative requirements on reporting if relevant, and with Treetops Montessori School policy and procedure on internal and external reporting.</li> </ul>
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<b>I agree to abide by this Code Conduct during my association with Treetops.</b>	<div> <div>.....</div> <div>Signature</div> <div>.....</div> </div> <div> <div>.....</div> <div>Date</div> <div>.....</div> </div> <div> <div>.....</div> <div>Full Name</div> <div>.....</div> </div>
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