



Volunteer Handbook

for the

SYDNEY MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Volunteers at Sydney Montessori School

At SMS, we treat each child with respect and endeavour to instill 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 SMS' philosophy therefore depends very much on compatibility between school and home life. SMS 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 may be 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 SMS, 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.

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 SMS 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 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, agreed by the School management in agreement with the class teacher. The Parent Liaisons are coordinated by the Registrar/Principal's Assistant and will be listed in the newsletter 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 School website and should, at all times, be welcoming and helpful.

Class Volunteering

It is an important part of Montessori 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 be different 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 Primary Coordinator. The coordinator oversees 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 maintenance e.g. a garden bed.

Library Book Care

A group of volunteers who may attend weekly or fortnightly for a block of time to assist with covering of books, catalogue etc.

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

School Board

The Sydney Montessori School Board of Governance ("The Board") is made up from elected parent and external community members. The Board has office bearers: Chairperson and Treasurer who are elected by the Board for each 12 month period. It has an appointed Company Secretary (usually the Business Manager). The role of the School Board is to ensure that Sydney Montessori School has, and meets, clearly established goals and that SMS's 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 usually meets twice each school term. Board members agree to the Board Code of Conduct. They are bound by Legal and confidentiality parameters.

Parents and Friends Committee

The Parents and Friends Committee is made up of all parents and guardians who are part of the School. The P&F has up to three office bearers, Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. These positions are open for election every twelve months with re-election to current positions available as desired. The P&F as a school committee reports to the Principal and notionally the School Board via the Principal. 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 School.

Volunteer Induction and Training

All volunteers for Sydney Montessori School should 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 SMS and forms the basis 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. 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 Check (WWCC) requirements, Sydney Montessori School requires all its staff, and any adult (who is not a parent/direct family member) doing unsupervised volunteer work which brings them into contact with students, to have applied for a Working With Children Check. Other volunteers do not need to have a WWCC 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).

All visitors to classrooms, including parents, who will be working with children must sign the Reception 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.

Pandemics: Covid-19

In times of major health disease outbreaks the expectations or participation of volunteers in the school may change at short notice. For example: During the Covid-19 pandemic:

- no volunteer may enter the classroom without the pre-approval of the school's administration (normally sought via the teacher).
- A volunteer must be free of any covid like symptom
- Volunteers must follow the school's expectations / requirements such as complying with social distancing, minimal close or sustained contact with students, hand washing / sanitising on entry / exit to the school and classroom, and
- Volunteers must consent to a temperature check if required by the school.

Volunteer Code of Conduct

Contractors, consultants and volunteers working with the School must be aware of the School 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:

Sydney Montessori School welcomes community participation and values its input.

We expect all members of the SMS community, including parents and guardians, to demonstrate our values, morals 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 SMS 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 Stage Coordinator 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 SMS, a volunteer's most important responsibility relates to his/her 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, Sydney 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.

Appendix A

VOLUNTEER INDUCTION CHECKLIST

Teacher / Supervisor prior to commencement:

1. Teacher / supervisor reviews the 'Volunteering within the School Policy and Procedure'.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Clearly define the need and role for volunteers, the 'category of volunteer', liaise with the Stage Coordinator if regular student support is needed and seek school administration permission as to the use of volunteers.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Consider provision of a mentor for the new volunteer to provide support (e.g. parents new to 'special lunch').	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Inform staff and students, if required, of the volunteer's starting date and duties.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Ensure volunteers are referred to the website or given / have read a copy of the 'Volunteer Handbook'.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Implement a short induction with new volunteers (return signed declaration to office).	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Identify other key contacts and provide contact details as appropriate:	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Acknowledge volunteers in the School's Newsletter	<input type="checkbox"/>

Volunteer Induction

1. Confirm that the volunteer has received, read and understands the Volunteer Handbook.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Confirm that the volunteer fully understands the role and the obligations, expectations and protocols (for example- cooperation and collaboration, use of first name, dress code, codes of behaviour) associated with that role.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Confirm that the volunteer explicitly understands class / student and teacher confidentiality requirements.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Discuss any special requirements of the volunteer (for example, any adjustment to the workplace to address any disability) and make necessary arrangements.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. If needed, ensure the volunteer is familiar with the school site and provide a physical orientation of the specific workplace.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Discuss emergency procedures and emergency exits (i.e. Fire Drill / Lockdown procedures, First Aid Officer (Office Administration), Health and Safety Officer (Bursar / Office Administration)).	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. If required, outline email protocols; use the School photocopier/s, telephones.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Ensure the volunteer has signed a 'Volunteer Declaration' form. (Please ensure this is returned to the office).	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix B

VOLUNTEER DECLARATION - CONFIDENTIAL

This form is to be used for regular class volunteers, excursions and camps. It is not intended for occasional one off visits (i.e. special lunch, P&F morning teas, assemblies, meetings, delivering 'birthday food' etc.).

Please complete the relevant details, sign, date and submit this form to the School before the commencement of any work in the School.

I _____ representing
(print name)

(Name of company, if applicable)

understand the confidential nature of the role of working within a classroom / school environment and that it is not appropriate for me to discuss student progress with anyone other than the class teacher or designated school administration supervisor.

I have reviewed and understand the expectations outlined as part of an induction program and / or the Parent Volunteer Handbook.

I agree to respect the privacy and confidentiality of the class, the work of the teacher and agree to honour the School's acceptable use of School equipment, including use of Facebook, social media, internet, photos and computers.

I declare that I do not have any circumstances, reasons or convictions that might preclude my working with or near children and undertake to inform the School immediately should my circumstances change or there arises any reason or conviction that may preclude my working with or near children.

I am/am not (delete one) a parent of a student enrolled in Sydney Montessori School.
(If not please complete the contact details below):

Home/Business address:	
Contact phone numbers:	
Email address:	

I certify the accuracy of the above information. I am aware that I may be required to provide a police clearance if considered necessary to verify the information provided.

Signature: _____ Date: _____