Westminster School

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Table of Contents

Introduction 3
Purpose 3
Scope 3
Summary 3
Values 4
Principles and Guidelines 4
When Visiting School Grounds or Attending School Activities and Events 6
Raising Concerns & Grievances with the School in an Appropriate & Productive Manner 9
Consequences of Breaching this Code 10
Monitoring & Review 11

Introduction

Westminster School ("the School") is committed to ensuring a safe and harmonious environment of learning and community. The School aims to provide an open, welcoming and safe environment for everyone. The School believes that all members of the School community play a valuable role in the life of the School.

They say it takes a village to raise a child. Similarly, the School cannot provide the best education for a child, or help equip that child with the skills required for a fulfilling adult life, without cooperation and support from that child's family.

To ensure such cooperation and support, this Community Code of Conduct (the "Code"), outlines the School's expectations for a student's parents, step-parents, guardians, grandparents, extended family members and carers (collectively, parents).

In developing this Code, the School recognises that parents ultimately want the best for their children. However, the School also expects parents to recognise that it must ultimately balance the interests of all of the School's stakeholders (including not only students and parents, but also the School's staff and their right to a safe working environment).

This Code operates in addition to any other School policies and procedures, which apply to parents and other School community members, and may be varied from time to time by the School.

Purpose

This Code ensures that all members of the School community treat and interact with each other in ways that demonstrate respect for themselves and others and uphold the School's values as iterated in the Westminster School Strategic Plan.

This Code does not attempt to provide a detailed and exhaustive list of what to do in every aspect of a parent's interactions with the School and the School community. Instead, this Code is intended to provide a set of general principles and guidelines to guide parents and other community members in their interaction with staff, students, parents and the wider School community. As such, this Code is intended to be practical, non-adversarial and non-legal. These principles and guidelines reflect the School's similar expectations for its Board, Principal, staff, contractors and volunteers.

The Code is written in line with the School's values and strategic directions.

Scope

This Code applies to parents and all other members of the School community, including family members of students, guardians and caregivers, carers, homestay hosts and their family members, local support persons and to past staff and family and friends of past students. The Code applies at all times, including on-site and off-site, during the course of a relationship between the School and a parent or member of the School community (which may exceed the duration of a student's enrolment). It also applies to personal, electronic and online interactions.

Summary

The five key expectations of parents and all other members of the School community are expanded on in the following pages, and can be summarised as follows:

(a) Support the educational ethos, rules and values of the School.

(b) Parents and all other members of the School community are expected to visibly support the educational ethos, rules and values of the School, and role model responsible and safe behaviours for their children and others in the community to learn from. Parents and all other members of the school community are also expected to comply with the School's policies and procedures, and support and encourage their children to do the same. Behave respectfully towards members of our community.

Parents and all other members of the School community should behave respectfully at all times towards the School's staff (including employees, contractors, volunteers and members of School community groups), students and other parents.

(c) Use technology and social media appropriately.

Parents and all other members of the School community are expected to be respectful in their communication with others, be mindful of privacy and safety in publishing information online, and ensure confidential information is not shared without permission.

(d) Be a responsible visitor and participant.

Parents and all other members of the School community must respect the School's risk-management procedures when visiting the School and attending School activities and events off-campus.

(e) Raise grievances appropriately and proactively.

Parents and all other members of the School community should raise genuine grievances they may have about such matters in an appropriate, constructive and respectful forum.

Values

The School is a place of learning for students and the rights of the student are first and foremost when educating and developing the student. The School is committed to:

(a) Our values of being resilient, kind, courageous, inclusive, curious and mindful;
(b) The wellbeing of each student being of fundamental importance;
(c) The provision of a safe and secure environment for students and staff;
(d) Providing an open, welcoming environment where everyone is valued and respected; and
(e) Encouraging parents and other School community members to support and participate in the life of the School.

Principles and Guidelines

Support the educational ethos and values of the School

Parents and all other members of the School community are expected to support the educational ethos and values of the School, model appropriate behaviours for their children to learn from, and work with the School as it educates and provides pastoral support to all students.

Parents and all other members of the School community can support the School and be positive role models by:

(a) complying with the School's policies, procedures and directions, rules and regulations, and ensuring their children do the same;

(b) respecting (and show to their children that they respect) that the School is inclusive and welcomes students from a variety of backgrounds, and with different needs;

(c) responding to School communications (eg by completing forms and providing permissions) in a timely manner when requested to do so by the School;

(d) encouraging their children to actively participate in the life of the School, including in the many sporting and extracurricular activities available (noting that some will be compulsory);

(e) supporting the School's commitment to develop a student's initiative, independence and sense of responsibility for their own lives and actions;

(f) supporting the School's approach to student behavioural concerns, which can include a range of outcomes (including those which are educational, pastoral or disciplinary in nature);

(g) being responsive to concerns raised by the School about their own child, including by being cooperative, providing information and attending meetings when required;

(h) raising grievances directly with the School, and in a timely manner;

(i) keeping the School informed about a child's needs (including but not limited to their behavioural, educational, physical or mental health needs). This includes providing updated medical information, family developments and other like information as it becomes available. However, parents need to also appreciate that while the School will take into account any new information, the School cannot accommodate every need; and

(j) keeping the School informed about a child's parenting arrangements, including any court orders that may be in place. However, parents should not involve the School in parenting disputes, or expect the School to act as the go-between for estranged parents;

(k) Recognising the damage that gossip can do within a school community, and avoid unconstructive commentary (including criticism, uninformed rumour or speculation) with other parents or students, including on social media.

Parents are expected to be a role model for responsible and safe behaviours. This includes ensuring the health and safety of all members of our School community (including staff, students, parents and alumni) and the wider community. Parents are expected to ensure that other individuals involved in their child's life, such as other relatives and carers, also comply with this Code.

When Visiting School Grounds or Attending School Activities and Events

Parents and other School community members must respect the School's risk management procedures when visiting the School. Visitors should immediately proceed to a reception area upon arrival to sign in and should only enter a classroom or other student environment when invited to do so by a staff member.

This requirement does not apply when visiting the School only to:

(a) attend an activity or event to which all members of the School community have been invited;

(b) visit the West (School uniform) Shop or Archives; or

(c) drop off or collect a child from School.

When visiting the School, or attending School activities and events, parents and other School community members should model appropriate and respectful behaviours and uphold the School's values. This includes:

(a) complying with relevant legal obligations, including any parenting or court orders;

(b) complying with the School's applicable occupational health and safety and risk management procedures;

(c) complying with and upholding the School's rules, policies and procedures;

(d) accepting the authority of the teacher (or teachers) when visiting the School and comply with any reasonable directions given by the School's staff; and

(e) only entering a classroom with permission from a staff member;

(f) listening respectfully, in the same manner required by students and staff, when attending any kind of School assembly, presentation, class event, co-curricular, sporting event or public meeting;

(g) treating all parents, staff, contractors, volunteers, students, and visitors to the School with courtesy and respect;

(h) demonstrating respectful conduct, good sporting conduct and fair play when attending the School's art, drama and sporting events;

(i) showing appropriate care and regard for the property of the School and others. Any damage should be reported to the School;

(j) behaving lawfully on School grounds whether at an event hosted by or connected to the school, whether conducted on site or otherwise;

(k) ensuring physical contact with students is appropriate given the age of, and relationship with, the student;

(l) showing appropriate care and regarding for property of the School and others. Any damage should be promptly reported to the School;

(m) dressing appropriately for the occasion; and

(n) not being under the influence of alcohol, drugs or prohibited substances.

(o) not providing, supplying, facilitating or enabling alcohol, drugs or prohibited substances to be brought to the School or a school related event. In this regard, if the School is to host an event involving alcohol, this will typically be supplied by the School (as appropriate) unless specific details are circulated to the contrary.

(p) recognising that the School is a non-smoking, non-vaping campus.

(q) not bringing pets to School without the consent of the School with special reference to the Dogs on Campus policy.

When driving in and parking on School grounds, parents and other School community members should, for the safety and wellbeing of our community:

(a) comply all traffic rules and any School management traffic system in place. This includes adhering to applicable speed limits, observing all traffic signs, limiting the use of car horns (unless indicating imminent danger), and parking appropriately and safely;

(b) ensure Interactions in regard to driving and parking on School grounds comply with this Code;

(c) when dropping off and picking up students from School, ensure the wellbeing and safety of others.

Being respectful towards staff, contractors, volunteers, School community groups and other members of our School community.

All staff, contractors and volunteers are entitled to a safe and enjoyable work environment. Accordingly, the School expects that parents will behave respectfully at all times towards other members of the School community. This applies not only to words used, but also to tone and body language, and similar expectations are embedded in the School's codes of conduct for staff and students.

"Respect" is intentionally a broad concept. The following is a non-exhaustive list of behaviours that are not respectful:

(a) Rude or insulting behaviour, including passive-aggressive, intimidating or derogatory language.

(b) Bullying, intimidation, discrimination, sexual harassment, victimisation and child abuse. Please note that in addition to being a breach of this Code, such behaviour may also be unlawful.

(c) Actual or threatened aggression (verbal or non-verbal) or violence.

(d) Behaviour that causes a risk to a person's health and wellbeing.

(e) Defamatory or disrespectful comments.

(f) Gossip, rumour, and innuendo.

(g) Raising one's voice, or using offensive language or actions, while communicating.

(h) Age-inappropriate language when communicating with or about children.

(i) Vexatious complaints.

If a parent or other School community member contacts a staff member, contractor or volunteer in relation to a query or concern regarding the School or a student, the recipient will respond within a reasonable period of time.

However, in order to most effectively discuss a particular query or concern, parents and other School community members wishing to speak to a staff member, contractor or volunteer (either in person or over the phone), should make an appointment in advance.

Parents and other School community members should:

(a) speak with or about staff, contractors and volunteers with courtesy and respect;

(b) use courteous and acceptable language;

(c) give encouraging and constructive feedback rather than unhelpful criticism;

(d) respect staff decisions and follow their directions; and (e) respect the privacy of staff, contractors, and volunteers.

Parents and other School community members should not:

(a) raise their voice when speaking;
(b) interrupt whilst a staff member, contractor, or volunteer is trying to speak;
(c) use profane, insulting, harassing, aggressive or otherwise offensive language;
(d) speak in a derogatory, disrespectful or offensive manner;
(e) assault (sexually or physically) a staff member, contractor or volunteer; or
(f) intimidate, undermine, threaten, bully or harass staff, contractors or volunteers.

When communicating with other members of the School community

Parents and other School community members should:

(a) speak with or about others with courtesy and respect;
(b) use courteous and acceptable language;
(c) give encouraging and constructive feedback rather than unhelpful criticism;
(d) contribute to a positive and friendly culture within the School community;
(e) support and encourage the values, activities and ethos of the School; and
(f) respect the privacy of others.

Parents and other School community members should not:

(a) raise their voice when speaking;
(b) interrupt while someone is trying to speak;
(c) use profane, insulting, harassing, aggressive or otherwise offensive language;
(d) deliberately exclude others or purposely treat some members of the School community differently from others;
(e) speak in a derogatory, disrespectful or offensive manner;
(f) assault (sexually or physically) other members of the School community;
(g) intimidate, undermine, threaten, bully or harass others;
(h) attempt to manage the behaviour of any student other than their own; or
(i) disclose the personal details of others to another person without consent.

Responsibility for guests

Parents and other School community members who invite any other person (adult or child) to be present at a School-related function or activity shall be responsible for that person and must ensure that they act at all times in a manner consistent with this Code.

When using technology and social media

Parents should recognise the potential for damage to be caused, directly or indirectly, to the School and others as a result of their personal use of social media (especially in circumstances when they can be identified as a parent and/or caregiver of the School, or when interacting with other members of the School community).

Accordingly, the expectations set out in this Code can also apply to the way a parent uses technology and behaves online. For example, parents should:

(a) respect a staff member's professionalism and personal boundaries, by not using their personal online presence to raise School matters (or otherwise engage in disrespectful behaviour);

(b) not take photos, videos or other recordings of another student without parental consent, and not publish information (including personal details, contact information, images and recordings) concerning a staff member, parent, student or other member of the School community online without express consent;

(c) avoid publishing information which may bring the School (or any of its staff, students, parents and other members of the School community) into disrepute. This includes where an image or recording shows a student in School uniform, or a member of the school community at the School or at a school activity or event, behaving inappropriately;

(d) not communicate with other students outside of the School, including by email or on social media, without prior consent from that student's parent(s);

(e) not discuss confidential or sensitive School matters, including in relation to grievances about a particular staff member or student, online;

(f) not, without the School's express permission, set up any online website, forum or group which features the School's name in its title, or which may suggest that it is operated or sanctioned by the School;

(g) obtain express permission to use the School's name or insignia in the title of any online website, forum or group, or online publication. In addition, no suggestion should be made that any such platform or material is operated or sanctioned by the School.

Parents and other School community members must not post on social media defamatory, offensive, sexually inappropriate or other material that may damage the reputation of the School. Parents understand that the School may remove posts on the School's social media sites that breach this Code.

Raising Concerns & Grievances with the School in an Appropriate & Productive Manner

The School is committed to the education and wellbeing of each student. It is therefore critical that parents are able to raise genuine concerns and grievances they may have about such matters in an appropriate, constructive and respectful forum.

The School's grievance management procedures are set out in the Policy and Procedure for Handling Parent Complaints (the Complaints Policy). The Complaints Policy sets out how concerns and grievances may be raised with the School; who they should be raised with; and how the School will deal with these in a respectful and timely manner.

Parents with concerns and grievances should consult the Complaints Policy. However, in general:

(a) Parents should take care with their volume, tone and vocabulary when communicating with another family's child.

(b) Parents should not communicate with another student about an issue concerning their own child. Parents must not attempt to discipline a student who is not their child (unless they are attempting to restrain a student from causing a risk to themselves or others) and should not raise their voice or be aggressive or hostile when communicating (verbally or non-verbally) with another family's child.

(c) Parents should raise their concerns with their child's teacher in the first instance. More serious concerns or grievances, including where a parent is dissatisfied with a teacher's response to a concern, may be raised with the appropriate member of the School leadership (as set out in the Complaints Policy).

(d) Parents should arrange a face-to-face meeting where possible to discuss their concerns and grievances, rather than relying on email or other written communications.

(e) Parents should clearly set out their concerns and grievances, and what they would practically like to see happen. If there is more than one issue or problem, parents should write a list so that they are adequately prepared and then decide which issue or problem matters most.

(f) Parents should appreciate that while the School is committed to dealing with their concerns and grievances in a timely manner, it will not always be practicable for staff to provide an immediate acknowledgement or response (particularly where a concern or grievance is sent by email).

(g) Parents should respect that the School employs experienced educators and other professionals who are well-trained in making academic, disciplinary, extracurricular, pastoral and wellbeing decisions every day. Understanding that while the School will always take into account the interests of the parent's child, the School must ultimately make decisions that take into account the interests of all students (and others who may be affected by the School's decisions).

(h) Parents should recognise that just as the School will seek to respect each student's privacy, the School will also respect the privacy of other members of the School community. This means there are limits to what information the School will share with a parent when issues arise. This does not mean that the School is not taking an issue or situation seriously or hiding information from a parent.

(i) If a parent is not satisfied with the School's response to a concern or grievance, a School policy may provide a parent with a right to request an internal review of the School's decision. Alternatively, an external body, court or tribunal may be able to deal with the issue. The School respects a parent's rights to invoke formal grievance resolution procedures. However, parents who refuse to engage in constructive processes that may resolve their grievances, or who choose to publicly air their grievances about the School (and in particular about staff or students) on social media, are not welcome.

Consequences of Breaching this Code

The Principal will have absolute discretion in deciding how to best respond to concerns about a parent's compliance with the Code.

If the Principal considers that a parent has breached this Code, the Principal or a delegate may implement one or more of the following consequences (and not necessarily in any particular order):

(a) A request that the relevant conduct immediately cease.

(b) A written warning.

(c) A parent (or another relevant person) being banned from the School grounds, either for a particular period of time or permanently.

(d) A parent (or another relevant person) being excluded from School activities or events.

(e) A requirement that a parent (or another relevant person) only communicate with a nominated School representative.

(f) Termination of the enrolment of a parent's child/ren.

(g) Disciplinary action for a staff member in accordance with the School's Employee Discipline Policy.

Staff and volunteers are empowered to take steps to protect their own health and wellbeing. If they feel that a parent is being inappropriate, they are encouraged to indicate this and ask that it stop. If it does not, or if a staff member feels that a parent's actions are posing a risk to their or someone else's health and wellbeing, they are empowered to remove themselves from the situation. This may include immediately concluding a meeting or phone call, or demanding that a parent immediately leave the School grounds (or a School activity or event).

Monitoring & Review

A review of this Code shall be conducted every three years.

The Head of Community Engagement shall be responsible for ensuring that this document is reviewed and updated as required.