



## Parents Code of Conduct

Canberra Montessori School is only one element of the diverse experiences needed by a child to receive the best education and help equip them with the skills required for a fulfilling adult life. The student's family is one of the most important of these elements and for the best possible outcome, the School needs your cooperation and support.

The School expects all members of its community to endeavour to put its values into action. The School's values are Respect, Curiosity and Connectivity – in other words: be respectful towards all members of the school community - children, staff and other parents; be curious about and engaged with your child's education; and actively connect with the school as a whole in whatever ways you are able. These values are expanded upon in the following pages.

To ensure such cooperation and support, this Code of Conduct outlines the School's expectations for all parents and guardians (collectively, Parents) with students enrolled at the School.

In developing this Code of Conduct, the School recognises that Parents ultimately want the best for their children. However, the School also expects Parents to recognise that it must 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 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, it sets out general expectations. As such, this Code is intended to be practical, non-adversarial and non-legal.

This Code of Conduct operates in addition to any other School policies and procedures which apply to Parents and may be varied from time to time by the School. Changes will be made in consultation with parents via the representative body that is the Parents and Friends Association (P&F).



## **Summary**

Further to the values above, the five key expectations of parents expanded upon in the following pages are as follows:

1. Support the educational ethos and values of the School

Parents are expected to visibly support the educational ethos and values of the School, and role model responsible and safe behaviours for their children and others in the community to learn from.

2. Behave respectfully towards members of our community

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

3. Use technology and social media appropriately

Parents 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.

4. Be a responsible visitor and participant

Parents must respect the School's risk-management procedures when visiting the School and attending school activities and events off-campus.

5. Raise grievances appropriately and productively

Parents should raise genuine grievances they may have about such matters in an appropriate, constructive and respectful manner using the avenues available to do so and as outlined in the School's Complaints Policy.

## **Support the educational ethos and values of the school**

Parents 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 can support the School and be positive role models by doing, for example, the following:

- Comply with the School's codes of conduct, policies, procedures, rules and regulations, and ensure their children do the same.
- Respect (and show to their children that they respect) that the School is inclusive and welcomes students from a variety of backgrounds, and with different strengths and needs.
- Respond to School communications (e.g. by completing forms and providing permissions in a timely manner) when requested to do so by the School.
- Encourage their children to actively participate in the life of the School, including in the classroom and any sporting and extracurricular activities available
- Support the School's commitment to developing a student's initiative, independence and sense of responsibility for their own life and actions.
- Support the School's approach to student behavioural concerns as outlined in the School's Behaviour Management document.
- Raise grievances directly with the School, and in a timely manner.
- Keep the School informed about a child's needs (including but not limited to their behavioural, educational, personal, and 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, and comply with its legal obligations, the School cannot necessarily accommodate every need.
- Keep 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.
- Recognise 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.

### **Behaving respectfully towards members of our community**

Canberra Montessori School expects that parents will behave respectfully at all times towards other members of the school community (including employees, contractors,



volunteers, students and other parents). 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 and is one of the School's three core values. The following is a non-exhaustive list of behaviours that are not respectful:

1. Rude or insulting behaviour, including passive-aggressive, intimidating or derogatory language.
2. 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.
3. Actual or threatened aggression (verbal or non-verbal) or violence.
4. Behaviour that causes a risk to a person's health and wellbeing.
5. Defamatory or disrespectful comments.
6. Gossip, rumour, and innuendo.
7. Raising one's voice, or using offensive language or actions, while communicating.
8. Age-inappropriate language when communicating with or about children.
9. Vexatious complaints.

### **Use of technology and social media**

The expectation set out in this Code of Conduct can also apply to the way a Parent uses technology and behaves online.

For example, Parents should:

1. Respect a staff member's professional and personal boundaries, by not using their personal online presence to raise School matters (or otherwise engage in disrespectful behaviour).
2. Not take photos, videos or other recordings of another student without their parent's 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.
3. 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.

4. Not communicate with other students from another family outside of the School, including by email or on social media, without prior consent from that student's Parent(s).
5. Not discuss confidential or sensitive School matters, including in relation to grievances about a particular staff member or student, online.
6. Not 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. Community members must obtain express permission to use the School's name or insignia in the title of any online website, forum or group, or printed or online publication. In addition, no suggestion should be made that any such platform or material is operated or sanctioned by the School.

#### **Be responsible when visiting School grounds, or attending School activities and events**

Parents must respect the School's risk-management procedures when visiting the School.

Parents should immediately proceed to Reception 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; or
- (b) drop off or collect a child from School.

When visiting the School, or attending School activities and events, Parents should model appropriate and respectful behaviours. This includes:

1. Complying with applicable occupational health and safety, student safety and risk-management procedures.
2. Complying with any reasonable directions given by the School's staff.
3. Showing appropriate care and regard for the property of the School and others. Any damage should be promptly reported to the School.
4. Dressing appropriately for the occasion.
5. Not being under the influence of drugs or alcohol.



6. Behaving lawfully on School grounds whether at events hosted by or connected to the School, whether conducted on site or otherwise.
7. Ensuring that physical contact with students is appropriate given the age of, and relationship with, the student.
8. Respecting the School's property and the property of other members of the school community (including staff, students and parents).

When dropping off and picking up students from the School, parents are expected to ensure the health and safety of all members of our school community, as well as the wider community, at all times.

Parents must comply with all traffic rules and any School traffic management 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.

Parents must also comply with any government issued health orders or directions in response to a pandemic.

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 of Conduct.

### **Raising concerns appropriately and productively**

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 complaints they may have about such matters in an appropriate, constructive and respectful forum. The School's complaints-management procedures are set out in the Complaints Policy. This 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 complaints should consult the policy. However, in general:

1. 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 and should not raise their voice or be aggressive or hostile when communicating (verbally or non-verbally) with another family's child.

2. Parents should raise their concerns with their child's teacher in the first instance. More serious concerns or complaints, including where a Parent is dissatisfied with a teacher's response to a concern, may be raised with the appropriate member of the School's Leadership Team (as set out in the policy).
3. If at all possible, parents are encouraged to engage in a face-to-face meeting to discuss their concerns and complaints, rather than solely relying on email or other written communications.
4. Parents should clearly set out their concerns and complaints, and what they would practically like to see happen.
5. Parents should respect that the School employs experienced educators and other professionals who are well-trained in making academic, disciplinary, extracurricular and wellbeing decisions every day. Understand 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).
6. 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.
7. If a Parent is not satisfied with the School's response to a concern or complaint, the School's Complaint Policy sets out the right of appeal to the School's Board via the Chair. 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 complaint-resolution procedures. However, Parents who refuse to engage in constructive processes that may resolve their complaints, or who choose to publicly air their complaints about the School (and in particular about staff or students) on social media, are not welcome.

### **Consequences for breaching this Code of Conduct**

The Principal has the delegated authority to decide how to best respond to concerns about a Parent's compliance with this Code of Conduct.

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



1. A request that the relevant conduct immediately cease.
2. A request for a written or verbal apology from the parent to a relevant party, for example to a Canberra Montessori teacher.
3. A written warning.
4. A Parent (or another relevant person) being banned from the School grounds, either for a particular period of time or permanently.
5. A Parent (or another relevant person) being excluded from School activities or events.
6. A requirement that a Parent (or another relevant person) only communicate with a nominated School representative.
7. Termination of the enrolment of a Parent's student(s).

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 by immediately concluding a meeting or phone call, or by demanding that a Parent immediately leave the School grounds (or a School activity or event).





## Behaviour Expectations

Canberra Montessori School can only provide the best education for a child or help equip that child with the skills required for a fulfilling adult life, with cooperation and support. The School recognises that Parents ultimately want the best for their children, and therefore expects Parents to recognise everyone's right to operate within a safe working environment. Therefore -

Canberra Montessori School expects that students will follow the **CMS Student Code of Conduct** and that Parents will act in line with the School's **Parent Code of Conduct** and behave respectfully at all times towards the School's staff (including employees, contractors and volunteers), other students and other parents. This applies not only to words used, but also to tone and body language.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of behaviours that are not respectful:

- Bullying, intimidation, discrimination, sexual harassment, victimisation and child abuse
- Actual or threatened aggression or physical violence
- Behaviour that causes a risk to a person's health and wellbeing
- Defamatory or disrespectful comments
- Gossip, rumour, and innuendo
- Requesting or demanding details about non-familial students (inappropriate requests may include but are not limited to home details, school processes, parent details, background, behavioural consequences)
- Raising one's voice, or using offensive language, while communicating
- Age-inappropriate language when communicating with children.

The **CMS Student Code of Conduct**, together with such rules and conditions as may be determined by, or with the authority of, the School Board from time to time, must be upheld at all times. The School may deal with a breach of the CMS Student or Parent Codes of Conduct, and other rules and conditions, in accordance with the Education Amendment Act 2022, including expulsion or suspension.

Parents may request the School Board, in writing, to reconsider any action taken as an exercise of discipline. The School Board will consider the request and may take any other



action it considers appropriate. The decision of the School Board following consideration of the request is final. Fees and other charges remain payable during a period of suspension.

### **Consequences for breach of behaviour expectations**

Under the Education Act 2004 and Education Amendment Act 2022, a student may be suspended for a stated period of no longer than 20 days for the purpose of ensuring the safe and effective learning environment of the School. If the Principal considers that the student has committed a serious breach of the **CMS Student Code of Conduct**, or has otherwise engaged in conduct which is prejudicial to the School, or its staff, or its students, and in cases where suspension is not suitable, the student may be expelled from the School. Signatories to the Enrolment Agreement will be consulted and informed in writing of the grounds and length of suspension or expulsion and offered the right of reply. In the case of suspension, the student will be given reasonable opportunity to continue his or her education and will be made available. In the case of exclusion, signatories to the Enrolment Agreement and the student will be offered information about alternatives for continuing their education.

If the Principal believes that a mutually beneficial relationship of trust and co-operation between signatories to the Enrolment Agreement and the School has broken down to the extent that it adversely impacts on that relationship, then the Principal may recommend that signatories to the Enrolment Agreement withdraw the student from the School.

### **Legislation**

ACT Education Act 2004

ACT Education Amendment Act 2022

Disability Discrimination Act 1991 and the Disability Standards for Education 2005 Privacy Act 1988