

Mansfield Steiner School Parent Code of Conduct

Introduction

Mansfield Steiner School relies on the relationships between students, staff, and parents to be nurtured throughout our journey. We value an environment where students and adults are encouraged to take the appropriate risks necessary for healthy, physical, psychological, and spiritual development. A commitment to honesty, trust, and a shared vision about the kind of community we want to build, centred on our values, is a necessary basis for our relationships. **Goodness, beauty, and truth** guide everything we do. *Goodness* is the foundation: kindness, integrity, and a commitment to making a difference. *Beauty* is found in creativity, craftsmanship, and the wonder of the natural world. *Truth* is sought through critical thinking, curiosity, and the courage to ask big questions. Together, these principles shape learners who are both grounded and inspired.

The following Parent Code of Conduct aims to guide some of our actions and formalise our commitment to grow a healthy school and community.

1. Commitment to Child Safety

Mansfield Steiner School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. We are a Child Safe Organisation, adhering to the *Child Safe Standards* as outlined in the **Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)** and the **Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)**.

All adults in the school community — including parents and carers — share responsibility for the protection of children. If you have a reasonable belief that a child has been, or is at risk of being, abused or neglected, you are **legally and morally obliged to act**.

Parent Obligations Include:

- **Reporting known or suspected child abuse** to Child Protection (Department of Families, Fairness and Housing) or to Victoria Police.
- Understanding that **failure to disclose** child sexual abuse is a criminal offence under the **Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)**.
- Support your child in speaking up if they feel unsafe or are concerned about the wellbeing of others.

- Notifying the school immediately if you have concerns about a student's safety, including concerns that may arise from interactions with staff, other students, or community members.

For more information on recognising signs of abuse and how to report, please visit the **Child Protection and Safety section** of our website.

2. Respectful Communication

Parents are expected to communicate respectfully with all members of the school community, including staff, students, and other parents. This includes:

- Students are not permitted to use a mobile phone at school (except at the teacher's discretion, for schoolwork purposes, in senior classes). All communication with your children during school hours must be through the office.
- Using courteous language in all forms of communication.
- Addressing concerns through appropriate channels as outlined in our Complaints Handling Policy.
- Refraining from aggressive or intimidating behaviour.

Persistent disrespectful behaviour may lead to consequences, including the review of the student's enrolment.

3. Expectations Regarding Smart Devices, Screen Time & Social Media

At Mansfield Steiner School, we believe that minimising unnecessary screen time and delaying exposure to social media and smart devices supports children's cognitive, social, and emotional development. We ask parents to partner with us in fostering healthy digital habits by adhering to the following expectations:

1. Limiting Smart Devices & Social Media Before Age 16

- We strongly encourage parents to delay giving children smartphones with internet access and social media accounts until at least 16 years of age.
- Research indicates that early exposure to social media is linked to increased risks of anxiety, depression, and cyberbullying (eSafety Commissioner, 2024). The Australian Institute of Family Studies (2023) also highlights that adolescents under 16 lack the neurological maturity to navigate online risks effectively.

- If a phone is needed for communication, we recommend a calls/text-only device (no internet access).

2. Monitoring & Reducing Excessive Screen Time & Gaming

- Parents are encouraged to set clear boundaries around recreational screen time, particularly gaming, which has been associated with sleep disruption and reduced physical activity (Australian Department of Health, 2025).
- Many online games have chat functions and amount to a kind of social media. We again recommend restricting access to these until at least 16 years old.
- The Australian Council on Children and Media (2024) recommends:
 - No screens for children under 2.
 - Maximum 1 hour per day for primary-aged children (with co-viewing where possible).
 - Balanced, monitored use for adolescents, ensuring screens do not replace real-world interactions.

3. Supporting a Tech-Mindful Home Environment

- Prioritise device-free family time, outdoor play, and creative activities.
- Discuss online safety and responsible digital behaviour with children, using resources from the eSafety Commissioner (www.esafety.gov.au/parents).
- Align with our school's technology-free camps/excursions policy to encourage presence and social connection.

By adopting these practices, parents help reinforce our educational approach and contribute to a healthier, more balanced childhood for all students.

Further Reading & Australian Research:

- eSafety Commissioner (2024) *"Teens & Social Media: Risks & Benefits"* [www.esafety.gov.au/research/teens-social-media]
- Australian Institute of Family Studies (2023) *"Digital Harms & Adolescent Development"* [aifs.gov.au/digital-teens]
- Australian Council on Children and Media (2024) *"Screen Time Guidelines"* [childrenandmedia.org.au/guidelines]

We appreciate your commitment to these principles and welcome ongoing dialogue about supporting your child's wellbeing in a digital age.

For detailed guidelines, please refer to our [Technology and Screen Time Policy](#).

4. Upholding the School's Reputation

We focus on the positive and always strive to improve. We ask that you:

- Represent the school positively in public and online forums.
 - Refrain from making disparaging comments about the school, staff, or students.
 - Address concerns through the school's established procedures rather than public platforms.
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5. Positive Relationships Among Parents

A harmonious parent community enhances the educational experience for all students. We encourage parents to:

- Engage with each other respectfully and supportively.
 - Collaborate in school activities and events.
 - Resolve conflicts amicably and privately.
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6. Responsible Use of Group Chats and Social Media

Group chats and social media platforms can be valuable tools for communication when used appropriately. Parents should:

- Use these platforms to share information relevant to school activities.
 - Avoid discussing individual students, staff, or sensitive school matters.
 - Report any concerns to the school rather than addressing them in group forums.
 - Parents should not post or share photos or recordings of other children online.
 - Parents must inform the school if they wish to restrict the use of their child's image in school promotions or public posts.
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7. Addressing Challenges and Concerns

Children may face various challenges during their educational journey. We ask parents to:

- Approach such situations with empathy and a problem-solving mindset.
- Communicate concerns promptly and constructively with relevant staff members.
- Support their children in developing resilience and coping strategies.

8. Use of Sentral

The Sentral Parent Portal is the primary communication platform between the school and families. It is essential that parents:

- Regularly log in to check updates on their child's attendance, academic progress, and school communications.
- Use Sentral to stay informed about upcoming events, excursions, and class activities.
- Ensure their contact details are up to date so they receive all notifications.
- Log absences in Sentral through the App.

Staying connected through Sentral supports a consistent and informed home-school partnership.

9. Accessing School Policies

For comprehensive information on our school's policies, including the Complaints Handling Policy, Technology and Screen Time Policy, and others, please visit the Policies section of our website:

<https://mansfieldsteiner.vic.edu.au/index.php/policies>

10. Breach of Expectations & Resolution Process

At Mansfield Steiner School, we value our partnership with parents in maintaining a respectful and supportive school community. This section outlines the process followed if the expectations outlined in this Code of Conduct are not met.

1. Addressing Minor Breaches

If a parent's actions or decisions conflict with school policies (e.g., permitting a primary student to bring a smartwatch, disregarding screen time recommendations), the school may:

- Informally discuss the concern with the parent, seeking mutual understanding.
- Provide educational resources (e.g., research on screen time impacts) to support alignment with school values.
- Request a written commitment to adhere to policies moving forward.



2. Escalation for Repeated or Significant Breaches

If unresolved or if the breach affects student wellbeing or school operations (e.g., persistent refusal to comply with device policies, disruptive behaviour on school grounds), the school may:

- Issue a formal written reminder of obligations under the Code.
- Arrange a meeting with the Class Guardian or School Leadership to discuss solutions.
- In rare cases, restrict access to school events or activities until the matter is resolved.

3. Serious Breaches & Enrolment Review

Behaviours that endanger others, undermine school values (e.g., harassment, unauthorised social media posts about the school community), or repeated refusal to adhere to policies may result in:

- A formal warning from the School Board.
- A temporary suspension of enrolment for the student, pending mediation.
- In extreme cases, termination of enrolment, per the school's enrolment contract and Victorian Independent Schools guidelines.

Appeals Process

Parents may request a review of decisions in writing to the School Board Chair..

Our goal is always resolution and collaboration. We appreciate your commitment to upholding Mansfield Steiner School's shared values.

Conclusion

By adhering to this Parent Code of Conduct, you contribute to a nurturing and respectful environment that aligns with the values of Mansfield Steiner School. We appreciate your cooperation and commitment to our shared goals.