

INTERNATIONAL CHINESE SCHOOL



CODE OF CONDUCT FOR PARENTS/VOLUNTEER HELPERS

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Preamble

Valuing the learning partnership between home and school in the education of students, International Chinese Christian School encourages parental involvement in the day-to-day life of its learning community.

According to child protection legislation any volunteer helper in the school is considered employed staff. The same expectations and standards in relation to adult/child interactions are applied to volunteer helpers and staff alike. This document sets out standards of behaviour required of all voluntary helpers at the School to:

- provide voluntary helpers with guidance as to the limits they should apply in their relationship with children
- protect voluntary helpers from situations that may raise suspicions regarding inappropriate behavior
- ensure voluntary helpers acting according to this code do not act in a sexually, physically or psychologically abusive or harmful manner toward students.

In all dealings with students voluntary helpers are required to support the Christian Worldview of the School, the foundation of which can be gleaned from the School's statement of faith. Actions of voluntary helpers towards children should always be motivated by a desire for the welfare of the child.

'Love always protects.'

1 Corinthians 13:7

If a voluntary helper is unsure of any issues or information regarding the code of conduct, or its application to a particular situation, she/he should talk to the Principal. The Principal will treat the her/him with respect, sensitivity and confidentiality so far as their legal obligations allow.

Purpose

The aim of this code is to guide voluntary helpers as to the limits they should apply in their relationships with children. While not covering every possible situation, it provides a framework that can be transferred to varying scenarios. It is designed to protect voluntary helpers from situations which may raise suspicions regarding inappropriate behaviour and ensure voluntary helpers acting according to this code do not act in a sexually, physically or psychologically abusive or harmful manner toward students. Necessarily this will place requirements on voluntary helpers when not in the school situation, as voluntary helpers' conduct outside the school in a non-professional setting will affect their personal standing in the community. This document sets out standards of behaviour required of all voluntary helpers engaged at the School.

Parents'/volunteer Helpers' rights

- To be respected as a person and partner in their child/ren's education.
- To active participant in their child/ren's education.
- To be informed and listened to regarding their child/ren's well being and progress.
- To have access as relevant and appropriate, to information relating to their child/ren's education.
- To have their contribution appreciated.
- To expect confidentiality regarding their child's and family's information and/or situation.
- To expect an environment that offers safety.

Parents'/volunteer Helpers' responsibilities

- To support the Christian ethos of the School.
- To develop a positive learning partnership with their child/ren's teacher.
- To be actively involved in the child/ren's education.
- To treat with respect all members of the School community.
- To communicate concerns through appropriate and recognized channels.
- To maintain confidentiality and privacy.
- To support and maintain a safe environment and encourage their children to do the same.

Alcohol

Alcohol must not be consumed or served by volunteer helpers while responsible for the care of students. Volunteer helpers must not undertake their duties whilst affected by the consumption of alcohol. Alcohol is not to be consumed at any School event when students are present, including those held outside school hours. (eg. weekends & school holidays)

Appropriate Language

It is only reasonable if respect is expected from students that they are in turn treated with respect, no matter what their actions. Volunteer helpers are reminded that intimidation of students can contribute to inappropriate responses as students may feel they are "backed into a corner". Volunteer helpers are requested to always address students in a calm and sensitive manner.

The language used by volunteer helpers at the School should reflect the standards expected of students. Whilst recognising that a stern voice is sometimes appropriate for redirecting student behaviour, communication with students, even when disciplining, must never belittle or intimidate. Swearing, profanity or words/phrases that could be construed as such must not be used. Volunteer helpers to volunteer helpers interactions should reflect the same standard in their shared relationships.

As a general rule the discipline of students should be referred to teaching staff.

Communications Equipment

Any communication via email between volunteer helpers and students must be limited to professional matters. Examples of appropriate volunteer helpers/student communication include publication of calendar or cancellation of a field trip. Examples of inappropriate email communication with students include “chat” about personal matters such as holiday activities, or forwarding of “humorous” emails. Volunteer helpers are not to engage in communications with students through social networking sites such as Facebook.

Volunteer helpers use of Internet at the School is for the purpose of preparing educational programs. Any volunteer helper who deliberately accesses pornographic or other inappropriate websites will face disciplinary action that will lead to a banning from school premises. The School reserves the right to monitor all email and internet usage through its computer networks.

Dress Code

Volunteer helpers should maintain an appropriate and modest dress standard at all times.

Medication

During excursions volunteer helpers if responsible for student medication are to ensure medications are dispensed to students according to instructions provided by parents. Any variation to these instructions may only happen following direct consultation with parents.

Medication prescribed and/or consumed by volunteer helpers that may affect the performance of their duties should be discussed with the Principal to allow for expectations to be amended appropriately.

Drugs

Volunteer helpers are not permitted to handle, consume or be under the influence of illicit drugs. Volunteer helpers must not provide illegal drugs to students. This is a criminal act and would be treated as such.

Gifts

If volunteer helpers choose to present students with occasional gifts, then no favouritism is to be shown. If volunteer helpers gift a student for his/her birthday, then all students should receive such a gift to a similar value on their birthdays.

Occasionally students/parents may choose to present a volunteer helper with a gift of appreciation. Whilst this is viewed as acceptable, volunteer helpers are not to solicit gifts from students/parents.

Neglect

Neglect occurs when a child is harmed by the failure of a person whose job includes care responsibilities towards a child, to provide basic physical and emotional necessities of life. Neglect is reportable to the office of the Ombudsman.

Volunteer helpers may be responsible for the care of students of the School. As such volunteer helpers must:

- Ensure that students are dealt with fairly, and never intimidated nor neglected.
- Ensure injured students receive adequate medical assistance.
- On field trips provide students with suitable food and accommodation.
- Parents are informed of incidents involving their child.

After hours contact

If students are working with volunteer helpers after general school hours (eg. School play) then this should be conducted in an open area and only if staff are also on site.

Volunteer helpers are not to visit students at home except if prearranged with parents in special circumstances. eg. Visiting a child who is ill.

Volunteer helpers are not to have children visit them at home, or at any other location except if an official school activity, fully sanctioned by the Principal.

Physical contact

While reasonable and appropriate attention with a student is warranted (eg. comforting a distressed student with a gentle hand on their back.) other forms of physical contact needs to be avoided.

The bounds of reasonable and appropriate attention are outlined below.

- Generally volunteer helpers should only touch student on the shoulders, upper arms or head. Volunteer helpers must never touch students on thighs, buttocks, genitalia or breasts. Should students require urgent medical attention to these bodily areas, and they are incapable of doing so themselves (under instruction), the attention should where practicable be administered by an adult of the same sex as the students with at least one other adult present.
- Volunteer helpers should generally refrain from hugging or embracing students.
- At times when a student is upset and a volunteer helper believes the student would be comforted by a hug, this may only happen in public view and preferably with another adult present. In this regard the volunteer helper must have confidence that the act of physical comfort is acceptable to the child and does not make the child feel uncomfortable. Any act of physical comfort should not be prolonged or frequently repeated.

- Hugs that are initiated by younger students are to be handled sensitively, and not encouraged.
- Occasionally to prevent a student causing themselves or others harm it may be necessary for volunteer helpers to use reasonable force. Restraint should only be used when there is a genuine threat to the safety of the student or others.

Where an individual volunteer helper, in the course of his/her duties, is necessarily alone with a student (eg. tutoring), it is important that there be appropriate professional distance between the student and the volunteer helper and that the student demonstrates that he/she feels safe in the situation.

Corporal punishment is not permitted at the School.

It is recognized that in some practical lessons (eg. Physical Education gymnastics lesson; Design and Technology instruction on safe use of implements) physical contact with students cannot be avoided for safety and instruction purposes.

Psychological harm to students

Use of language or actions that may cause psychological harm to students is not permitted. Examples of such inappropriate behaviours include, but are not limited to:

- Subjecting students of one gender or social grouping to harsher or more humiliating punishment than another.
- Consistently belittling a student through derogative language or actions.
- Restricting a student's freedom on an ongoing basis (eg. opportunity for social interaction).

Sexual and other personal relations with children

Appropriate professional relationships between volunteer helpers and students are to be maintained at all times. Volunteer helpers must not court, date or develop a romantic relationship with students of the school.

The following actions between volunteer helpers and students are prohibited, and volunteer helpers engaging in such behaviours will find themselves subject of formal investigation relating to child protection.

- unwarranted and inappropriate touching.
- kissing.
- inappropriate conversations of a sexual nature.
- suggestive remarks or actions including showing publications, electronic media, or illustrations which are sexually suggestive (other than in the context of approved educational curriculum such as PDHPE or Art).
- jokes of a sexual nature, obscene gestures.
- sexual exhibitionism.

- personal correspondence with a student in respect of the volunteer helper's feelings (including sexual feelings) for the student.
- deliberate exposure of students to the sexual behaviour of others, other than in the case of approved teaching material.

Volunteer helpers should be aware that young people becoming sexually aware may be confused by the actions of a volunteer helper. If a volunteer helper becomes aware of the possibility of a child having a 'crush' on them, they must share this information with the Principal so that the situation can be effectively managed in a sensitive and supportive manner.

Volunteer helpers should at all times be observable to others when dealing with individual students.

Privacy

Individuals have a right to privacy even when they transgress School rules and expectations.

Television, DVD and other media

Documentaries/movies are only to be shown if they support the attainment of educational outcomes. Children from K-6 are not to view any program above a "G" rating without prior parental approval. It is possible to show excerpts from a higher rated program, as long as editing brings what is seen back to an age appropriate level.

Tobacco

Tobacco products are not to be consumed by volunteer helpers on School grounds, or within view of it, nor at School events.

Driving

Volunteer helpers are not to transport students in their private vehicle except for the purposes of a sanctioned and official school event.

Please also refer to:

'Child Protection Policy'.

Peter Jamieson
Principal