



Avila College

Safeguarding Children and Young People - Parents/Carers as Partners in Catholic Education

PARENTS/CARERS CODE OF BELONGING

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Rationale

Effective partnerships for the education of young people are based on a foundation of shared values and mutual respect between parents/carers and all members of the Avila College (the College) community. These partnerships acknowledge the respective roles and responsibilities of each of the participants involved.

The College respects parents/carers fundamental human right to know, understand and share in decisions that affect the education and wellbeing of their children. We are committed to nurturing respectful relationships and active partnerships with you as parents/carers. We believe that our students' learning journeys are enriched through positive and reciprocal home and school relationships.

This Parents/Carers Code of Belonging provides a framework to support effective partnerships with parents at the College. It is intended to guide respectful interactions between staff, parents/carers, students and the wider community and should be read in conjunction with other College policies. It articulates the College's expectations around our culture of respectful relationships and specifies the College's position on behaviours/interactions that breach our culture of respect. (1)

Our Culture of Respectful Relationships

Among students, staff and parents/carers we strive to develop the following:

- a respect for the innate dignity and worth of every person
- an ability to empathise and understand the situation of others
- a co-operative attitude in working with others
- open, positive and honest communication
- the ability to work respectfully with other people and trusting relationships
- responsible actions
- a safe environment, free from harassment, violence and discrimination

Interactions within the College community must demonstrate respect for the rights and responsibilities of its members, including other parents/carers and College staff.

In upholding this culture, we expect that parents/carers will:

- model acceptable behaviour at all times
- support the College's Catholic ethos, traditions and practices
- support the College in its efforts to maintain a positive and safe teaching and learning environment
- understand the importance of healthy parent/teacher/child relationships and strive to build positive and respectful relationships
- support and adhere to College policies
- engage with staff, other parents and students with respect and courtesy

In upholding this culture, we expect that staff will:

- communicate with you regarding your daughter's learning, development and wellbeing
- provide opportunities for involvement in your daughter's learning
- maintain confidentiality over sensitive issues
- relate with and respond to you in a respectful and professional manner
- ensure a timely response to any concerns raised by you

The College expects parents/carers to partner with the College to enhance their daughter's faith development, learning and wellbeing by:

Student Engagement Guidelines for Parents/Carers

- supporting the Catholic ethos of the College, ensuring that, unless unwell, their daughter engages in the 'faith-life' of the College including attendance at Eucharists and Reflection Days
- ensuring their daughter's attendance at school, including co-curricular events and camps
- helping their daughter to arrive punctually at school
- showing a genuine interest in their daughter's schoolwork and progress, including reading school reports, continuous online feedback, teacher emails and attending parent/student/teacher meetings
- supporting and prioritising their daughter's learning, including maintaining appropriate time for the completion of homework learning tasks
- encouraging their daughter to strive for their personal best in her academic endeavours
- supporting all publicly available College policies and procedures

Health and Wellbeing Guidelines for Parents/Carers

- providing timely and accurate information about their daughter's learning, health and wellbeing
- ensuring that all contact and medical information is accurate and up-to-date
- supporting the College in its management of students' behaviour and application of the restorative practice model - encouraging their daughter to accept responsibility for her actions and the effect on others
- seeking appropriate professional advice, diagnosis and support when requested by College staff
- providing all necessary items of equipment and uniform, ensuring that they are in good condition
- not physically disciplining or berating their daughter whilst on school property or at a College event

Communication Guidelines for Parents/Carers

- replying to staff communications in a timely manner (within 48 hours for routine matters, 24 hours for urgent matters)
- ensuring contact details, in particular mobile phone, CareMonkey details and email address, remain up to date
- communicating in a considerate, respectful and polite manner in all correspondence and conversation

- reading College communications, including EDMs (electronic direct mail outs), letters, CareMonkey requests and newsletters
- respecting the reputation of staff and understanding that social media and other public forums are not appropriate places to air grievances or to resolve matters of concern
- contacting staff via the College email address (general staff and teachers) or via phone/email (Year Level Coordinators, Curriculum Leaders and Senior Leaders)
- respecting teachers' preparation and meeting time during the school day and making an appointment at a mutually convenient time (generally business hours) to speak to a staff member

Personal Conduct Guidelines for Parents/Carers

- not removing their daughter from the College without going through the General Office, signing her out and having a valid reason to do so
- ensuring that they attend the General Office on arrival at the College
- complying with the instructions of College staff at all times
- conducting themselves in a lawful and ethical manner in all interactions with members of the College community
- respecting and valuing the difference between people, their beliefs, ideas and opinions
- reporting issues of safety, risk of harm or inappropriate behaviour to the College
- ensuring upon their daughter's exit from the College that all school properties have been returned to the appropriate department

Matters of Concern

“Catholic teaching emphasises the primacy of parents as the first teachers of their children. Within the reality of the schooling experience, it is recognised that from time to time misunderstandings and differences of opinion will occur, and that these need to be resolved satisfactorily in partnership with the stakeholders involved. Addressing such matters within a framework of dignity, respect and truth can provide powerful opportunities to model the love of Christ in the reality of our contemporary world.”
(2)

Guiding Principles

In building and nurturing this culture, the College acknowledges that students, parents/carers and staff can sometimes feel aggrieved about something that is happening at the College. Every member of our community has a right to have their grievance or complaint addressed. The College will work positively and resolutely to achieve a satisfactory outcome for the people involved.

If a parent/carer has a complaint or concern with a member of staff, they should:

- speak to the staff member involved and try to resolve the concern with mutual respect and clear communication.

If it is not possible to resolve the concern in this manner, then raise the matter with the:

- Year Level Coordinator for student wellbeing concerns
- Curriculum Leader for teaching and learning concerns

If the matter still hasn't been resolved, or if the matter is very serious, then make an appointment to speak with the appropriate Director or Deputy Principal.

Further information can be found in the Avila College Complaints Resolution Policy.

Raising Concerns and Resolving Conflict Guidelines for Parents/Carers

Conflicts and incidents between students that occur at the College ought to be referred directly to the College for investigation and resolution.

In raising concerns on behalf of your daughter, or making a complaint about the College's practices or treatment of your daughter, we expect that you will:

- listen to your daughter, but remember that a different 'reality' may exist elsewhere
- observe the College's stated procedures for raising and resolving a grievance/complaint (ie. The Avila College Complaints Resolution Policy)
- follow specified protocol for communication with staff members, including making appointments at a mutually convenient time and communicating your concerns in a constructive manner
- refrain from approaching another child while in the care of the College to discuss or chastise them because of actions towards your child. Refer the matter directly to your daughter's teacher for follow-up and investigation by the College
- not approach other families with the intent of managing matters that arise at school
- raise the concern with their daughter's Homeroom teacher or Year Level Coordinator

Staff Guidelines

In responding to your concerns or a complaint, we expect that staff will:

- observe confidentiality and a respect for sensitive issues
- ensure your views and opinions are heard and understood
- communicate and respond in ways that are constructive, fair and respectful
- ensure a timely response to your concerns/complaint
- strive for resolutions and outcomes that are satisfactory to all parties.

Workplace Safety

The College places high value and priority on maintaining a safe and respectful working environment for our staff. Staff have a right to feel safe in their workplace. Where a parents/carers behaviour is deemed to be contrary to the Gospel values of the College, causing distress to a staff member and others, we may exercise our right to impose a temporary or permanent ban from the parent/carer entering the College premises.

These behaviours include, but are not limited to:

- shouting or swearing, either in person or on the telephone
- physical or verbal intimidation
- aggressive hand gestures
- writing in any form rude, defamatory, aggressive or abusive comments to/about a staff member
- racist or sexist comments
- damage or violation of possessions/property.

In the case of acts of violence that cause physical/psychological harm to a staff member and his/her property, the matter may be reported to the police for investigation.

The Avila College Parents/Carers Code of Belonging is meant as a guideline to parents/carers and not an exhaustive list. It is intended to assist parents and carers to engage fully with the College and resolve issues that may arise so that high standards of care and education are maintained, duty of care is fulfilled and interactions between members of the school community are always respectful and in the best interest of our young people.

VERSION HISTORY

Version	Date Issued	(Minor, Major Change)
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July 2018	July 2018	Minor
July 2020	August 2020	Major

Document approved by Principal and ratified by the Avila College Advisory Board	
Next Review Date	July 2021
Person Responsible	Deputy Principal Student Wellbeing Director of Student Wellbeing Principal
Related Documents	Avila College Complaints Resolution Policy
References	(1) https://www.cem.edu.au/About-Us/Policies/2-25-Parents-as-Partners.aspx (2) https://www.cem.edu.au/About-Us/Policies/Complaints.aspx (2.20)