# PARENT HANDBOOK

ST. AMBROSE PRIMARY SCHOOL
WOODEND

# Principal's Welcome



As your Principal at St Ambrose I am delighted to be in a position to make a positive difference in children's lives. I am passionate about learning and I feel a deep commitment to honour the trust placed in me to do all that I can to lead and support our community into creating a happy and vibrant school which truly supports our children's varied needs so that they may thrive in our world.

As a St Ambrose staff we are dedicated to creating an inclusive and caring environment which inspires, engages and nourishes your child's growth in all areas. We want to support your child to be highly motivated about coming to school and feel confident to immerse themselves in the diverse learning opportunities offered.

Together we enable our vision, "*Centred by Faith, In Partnership with Community, We Provide Excellence in Learning*". We are a Community of Learners who:

- *respect the sacred dignity of each person.*
- *embrace differences and diversity.*
- *engage with the deep questions of life.*
- *commit to achieving the highest standards possible.*
- *search for truth.*
- *build a culture of learning together.*
- *honour equitable access and opportunity for all.*
- *make a difference in the world.*

St Ambrose is the parish school of St Ambrose Parish of Woodend. We recognise each child as being unique and formed in the image of God. We are a school community which manifests a friendly, trusting collaboration between School, Parish and Parents for the ongoing development and benefit of each child.

Our school provides a wonderful learning environment based on diverse learning activities initiated and facilitated by a team of caring and dedicated education professionals, supported by you, your child's first and foremost educators in their formative years. The staff aim to work in partnership with you and encourage you to be an active participant in the school activities.

We see learning as a natural process. Indeed our children come to us curious and motivated to learn. Our school should be one which fosters creativity, encourages critical thinking and is flexible in its approach to support individual learning styles.

We hope you find our website and newsletters informative and that you can gain some insight into what we offer. To gain further insight into the culture of St Ambrose I would be very happy to meet with you and show you through our school. We hope that you will sense an inclusive and caring environment which will provoke, inspire and engage. It is our hope and desire that joining our community will be an enriching and life giving experience for your child and your family.

We want to support your child to be highly motivated about coming to school and to feel confident to immerse themselves in the diverse learning opportunities offered. Our work is guided by the message of Christ, which always seeks to be contemporary, innovative, and engaging. We aim for our work with our community and your children to be a process of discovery and a creative adventure of the mind. We stay open to the infinite possibilities as we learn together.

The most important feature of our school community will always be the people in it. In whatever capacity you are currently involved in our community, please know that you are always welcome. Whether you are past, existing or prospective members of St Ambrose, our doors are open to you all to engage with us and to feel the warm sense of belonging.

It is our great privilege to be able to work in partnership with you to bring about growth and development in every aspect of your child.

# Curriculum

At St Ambrose we aim to provide a well balanced approach to learning. Our children come from varied backgrounds and they spend a big part of their lives at school. Education therefore needs to be viewed as part of life not just preparation for it. It should be relevant, and purposeful so as to engage them and serve their needs. A richly diverse curriculum facilitated by teachers who are passionate, capable as well as caring can cater for the varied interests and needs of students. Methods of delivery vary and opportunity for both formal and informal learning, keeps the school environment stimulating and interesting.

Literacy and numeracy as well as knowledge of key disciplines have been identified as the cornerstone of schooling for young Australians. Students benefit from and need explicit teaching in literacy and numeracy to gain the necessary skills to support and enjoy their development of interests in other areas as well as to gain the necessary grounding to broaden opportunity and function as literate and numerate people in the world. We use their interests to choose content to motivate them to

develop reading, writing and numeracy competencies. We use a combination of teacher directed as well as student directed, open ended and experiential learning opportunities.

It is now recognised that schooling should support the development of skills in cross disciplinary, critical and creative thinking, problem solving and digital technologies, which are essential in all 21st century occupations. These objectives lie at the core of the national science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) school education strategy to lift student engagement and attainment in STEM and improve student outcomes. Our students have displayed a keen interest and high level of engagement in our STEM work and they are actively involved in the problem solving and learning process as well as in setting goals for their learning and mapping their path of research. The skills they practice through STEM projects support them to develop a growth and life-long learning mindset as well as capabilities across STEM areas. It is always wonderful to watch children discover new potentials within themselves when engaged in their learning.

Kind regards,

Bronwyn Phillips
Principal



## Statement affirming and outlining St Ambrose' commitment to teaching our children what it means to be an Australian Citizen.

At St Ambrose' we are committed to creating an environment which supports the development of effective Australian citizens, who have an awareness of the values and systems which underpin our democracy.

We strive to ensure that our children develop the following:

- An understanding of, and commitment to, Australia's democratic system of government, law and civic life.
- The capacity to clarify and critically examine values and principles that underpin Australia's democracy and the ways in which these contribute to a fair and just society and a sustainable future. These values/principles include – Care and Compassion, Doing Your Best, A Fair Go, Freedom, Honesty and Trustworthiness, Integrity, Respect, Responsibility, Understanding, Tolerance and Inclusion.
- The knowledge, skills and values that support active citizenship and the capacity to act as informed and responsible citizens.
- An appreciation of the local, state, national and global rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic life.
- An appreciation of the experiences and heritage of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their influence on Australian civic identity and society.
- An appreciation of the uniqueness and diversity of Australia as a multicultural society and a commitment to supporting intercultural understandings within the context of Australian democracy.
- An understanding of the ways in which citizens and governments contribute to environmental sustainability in local to global contexts and a commitment to adopting values, behaviour and lifestyles required for a sustainable future.
- An appreciation of the influence of media, information and communication technologies on the views and actions of citizens and governments.
- An understanding of historical perspectives on Australia's development as a democratic nation.
- An understanding of the ways in which governance structures from other countries are similar to or differ from democracy in Australia

# Chapter 1: Transition & Starting School

## Transition Sessions

We want to do all that we can to support your child in making a positive start to their school life.



Students are encouraged to attend three transition sessions commencing in 11 & 18 November and 1 December 2026. These sessions provide your child with the invaluable opportunity to familiarise themselves with the school and learning environment. It also supports the teachers in getting to know your child and provide valuable information for consideration when placing students in home groups for 2026.

Please be aware that the allocated groups are not fixed and may change throughout the transition program. By Session 3, the home groups for 2027 will be confirmed.

## Transition Session Dates

On the day of the transition sessions, parents/carers are requested to bring their students five minutes before their session commences. You will be provided with details of where to drop off your child before attending the first information session. Students and parents will be provided with a name badge at each session. This allows us to get to know you and your child by name. It also helps you when meeting new parents for the first time.

At the end of the session, parents are asked to wait outside the Foundation classrooms and collect their child from the classroom teacher.

# Parent Learning & Social Opportunities

School Open Morning — Monday 18 May 2026 9.30-11.00am
Tuesday 14 July 2026 9.30-11.00am

Prep Open Day and Information Session — Tuesday 23 June 2026 5.30-6.30pm

Whilst your child is attending the three transition sessions, we provide information sessions for parents at the same time. The main focus for these sessions are:

**Session 1:** Wednesday 11 November 2026 - 9.00am-10.00am

- **Student focus:** Through stories, songs and games children are given the opportunity to get to know each other and the teachers. Getting to know the school by visiting the art room and the playground.
- **Teacher focus:** Introducing the school and learning children's names. Observing the children in the school setting.
- **Parent focus:** Getting to know each other over a cuppa and informal chat with the principal and deputy principal.

**Session 2:** Wednesday 18 November 2026 – 9.00am-10.00am

- **Student focus:** To become more familiar and comfortable in the school setting.
- **Teacher focus:** Observing the children and learning about their personalities and needs.
- **Parent focus:** How does your child learn and grow? How can I assist transition? Is my child ready for school? Presentation and Q&A time.

**Session 3:** Tuesday 1 December 2026 – 9.00am-11.00am

- **Student focus:** Going up day. Students will spend time in their 2027 class group and room.
- **Teacher focus:** Introducing the children to their new classroom and classmates. Having some fun and developing confidence about coming to school.
- **Parent focus:** Student Wellbeing / Special Needs / Program Support / Parents as Helpers.

**Numeracy interview:** Monday 14 or Tuesday 15 December 2026
30 minute 1-1 meeting with the teacher (Prime focus is on building rapport).

**Literacy interview:** Friday 29 January or Monday 1 February 2027
30 minute 1-1 meeting with the teacher.

**Prep Parent Gathering** Wednesday 10 March 2027
Prep Parents gather for a morning hosted by the school. It is a great opportunity to meet other Prep parents.

# School Starting Date

School commences for Foundation students on Tuesday 2 February 2027.  Prep students will be dismissed at 12.30pm for the first week of their schooling.




# First Morning of School

To ensure a happy, smooth start on the first day, we ask that you are at school no later than 8.45am.

On the first day, you are asked to take your child to their designated classroom via the external door.

This is a big day for families and children approach it differently. Some relish in the attention and excitement whilst others are nervous and overwhelmed by too many people around. It is better to treat starting school as a natural progression from Kindergarten and not to build it up too much as it can be an anti-climax and children can take time to adjust.  To support a smooth, calm and positive transition we ask that you say goodbye to your child as soon as they move into the classroom to allow them the space they need to be independent.

There will be staff on site who will invite you to have a family photo taken. This photo will be printed and sent home with your child during the first week of school.
At the end of the day, students can be collected outside their classroom at 12.30pm.

# Beginning of Term



After the first week of schooling, our Foundation students will attend regular school hours 9.00am to 3:30pm for four days of the week. They will not be required at school on Wednesdays each week as per the calendar supplied at the orientation. This will enable the students to break up the week with a rest, while at the same time establishing school routines. Foundation students will commence full weeks starting 1 March 2027.

# Brain Food, Recess Snacks & Lunch Time

Brain Food: Students have a healthy brain food break at 10.00am. We encourage snacks that can be eaten during learning time, this might include cut up fruit or vegetable sticks, or snacks with no packaging or mess. Water is the only drink allowed in the classroom.

Recess Snacks & Lunch Time: Students eat both their recess snack and lunch with their class at 10.55am for recess (11.00-11.45am) and 1:55pm for lunch (1.55-2:40pm) and are supervised during these times. It is advised that students are provided with food that they enjoy and that is nutritionally sound. In the interests of caring for the environment we encourage less use of plastics so nude food in lunch boxes with compartments as well as waxed cloth wrapping is a good alternative.

Drinks at School: The students are encouraged to drink water throughout the day to re-hydrate, so please send along a drink bottle each morning. All classrooms have a filtered water dispenser that students are encouraged to use to fill up their drinking bottles.

Food Allergies: Please be advised that there are a number of students who have food allergies and be aware of the important information on anaphylaxis later in this handbook. A critically important part of managing this at St Ambrose is that students are not to share food with other students at school. This means that we don't allow shared birthday treats on birthdays. This became problematic therefore we acknowledge birthdays by giving a card and announcing these at assemblies.

# Spare Clothing

It can be very handy to have some spare clothing items in your child's bag in case they are needed at times, such as a wet weather day or after an accident. If you have packed any spare clothing items, please ensure they are clearly labelled. We endeavour to ensure that appropriate cover is used for particularly messy activities, however sometimes accidents do happen! At the very least, it is always a good idea to have a spare pair of underwear, socks and shorts in the school bag.

# Parent Assistance in the Classroom



The teachers and students welcome your participation in your child's education and appreciate the support and assistance parent helpers provide in the classroom. We have many procedures in place to support the health and safety of our school community. Because of this, it is very important that the following are adhered to:

- All parent helpers and volunteers are to provide the office with a copy of their Working with Children Check. WWCC applications can be completed online. http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au. There are no fees for volunteer WWC checks.
- All parent helpers and volunteers are asked to sign a Parent Helper Agreement (confidentiality agreement) at the start of each school year.
- Parent Helper Induction sessions are run at the start of the year. All parent helpers must complete this induction.
- Before entering the classroom to assist, parents are to sign in at the office where they will be given a visitor sticker to wear. Parents are also asked to sign out when they leave.

These procedures are to ensure we provide the highest standards of safety for everyone in our school.

# Home Reading Parent Helpers

Our parent helpers mostly provide support through listening to students read and changing take home reading books, between 9.00am and 9.30am in the mornings. Teachers will ask for volunteers early in the year and then organise a weekly schedule.

Please understand that toddlers can be a distraction for the students in the grade and also to you. We therefore ask that you don't bring them with you if you are supporting in the classroom where the focus needs to be on our students learning. A Parent Helper Induction session will be provided early next year to support parents to be effective classroom helpers.

# Chapter 2: General Information

## Our Story

St Ambrose School is an educational institution, registered since 1906 but in existence since approximately 1859, that gives careful attention to academic and personal excellence, in a manner that allows children to develop to the best of their individual ability. We endeavour to provide an environment that welcomes, nurtures and stimulates the children in our school academically, spiritually, socially, emotionally and physically. We believe that parents are the primary educators of their children and we strive to create an atmosphere of partnership in the educational process between the staff of the school and the parents. The school exists primarily to assist the Parish and its families in the faith development of their children.

St Ambrose School facilities come under the master plan of the St Ambrose Parish Centre. The Parish Centre comprising of the church, presbytery, school and hall. The school currently provides 10 general-purpose learning areas, an administration centre, library, meeting rooms, STEAM room, theatre, staff room and several storerooms.  Audio/Visual and I.C.T. facilities are available in each classroom and are networked throughout the school. The school also utilises both the church and hall for various school needs.

The school was successful in receiving a State Government grant of $3,278,000 for the upgrade of our facility, and building works were completed at the end of 2023 to provide contemporary, flexible and inclusive spaces with the addition of:

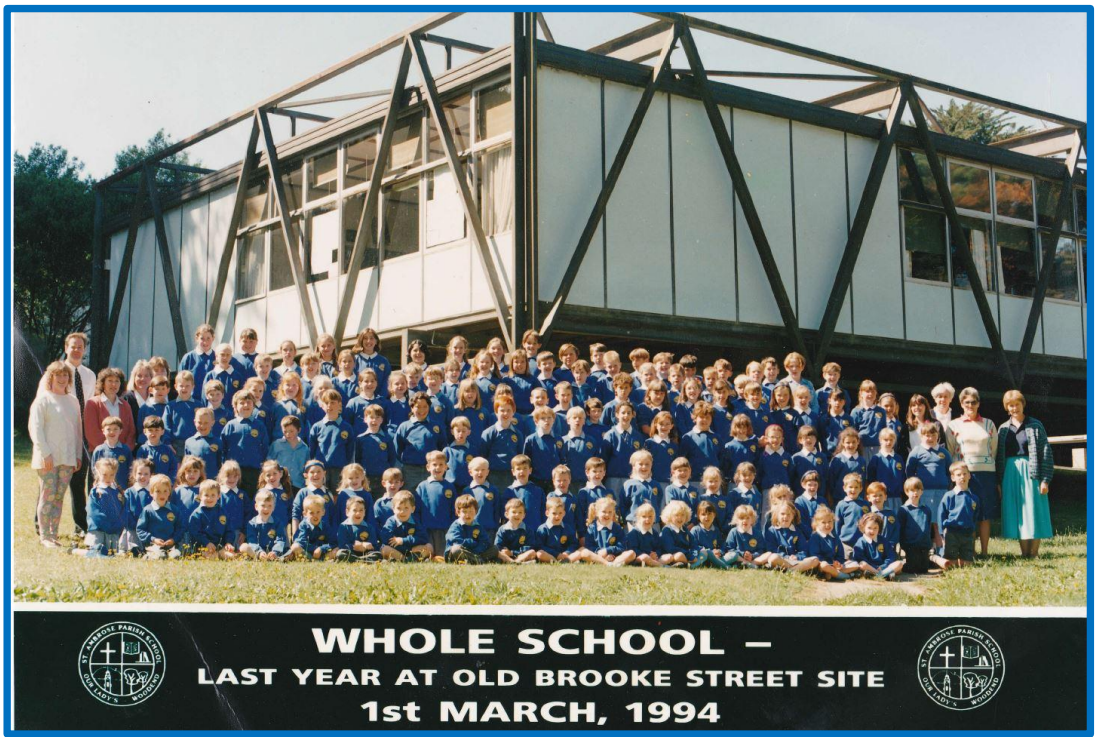
- further classrooms;
- a multipurpose area;
- an outdoor classroom;
- toilets accessible from the playground;
- new canteen;
- the option for opening up the classrooms to create flexible learning spaces;
- improved accessibility for all;
- the current corridor has become a learning street with break out areas form the classrooms.



*Time Line of Catholic Education in Woodend:*

| | |
|---|---|
| Pre 1830's | Woiwurrung aborigines inhabit the area |
| 1820's - 1840 | Explorers Hume & Hovell and Major Mitchell pass through the area. Mitchell describes area favourably. Pastoralists take up tracks of land and settlement begins. |
| 1859 | First historical mention of a Catholic School being in operation, the first Principal being Mr. William Barry, said to have walked to school from Kyneton. |
| 1865 | Land bought to build the Catholic Church. |
| 1866 | First Catholic Church built in Woodend, next to the school then called St Ambrose. |

| | |
|---|---|
| 1889 | Woodend made a separate parish consisting of Woodend and Trentham. |
| 1901 | Sisters of Mercy came to Woodend to staff the school on the Church site. They had come to Kyneton in 1889. |
| 1905 | The Parish School is first registered. |
| 1911 | School moves to 'Blanchewood' property, a convent from 1901, and a residence from about 1873. |
| 1971 - 1978 | Carmelite Sisters are resident in Woodend and staff the school. |
| 1973 | Previous school buildings erected in Brooke Street. |




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|---|---|
| 1979-1989 | Mercy Sister, Sister Mary Austin is Principal of the school, but the rest of the school staff is lay. |
| 1990 | Principal: Mr. Michael Hilbert. School is staffed solely by lay staff. |
| 1994 | Principal: Mr. Robert Macklin. Planning permit for relocation and new school granted. |
| 1995 | New school built. School renamed St Ambrose and relocated to Parish site. |
| 1995/1996 | Father Hal Ranger appointed as Parish Administrator. |
| 1996 | The school provides educational services for more families than ever before. First full year of operations in the new school. |
| 1997 | Father Vincent Peile appointed as Parish Priest. |

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|---|---|
| 1998 | School Advisory Board established. Stage 2 of the school building completed. |
| 2003 | Father Tony Hally appointed as Parish Priest. |
| 2009 | Stage 3 Building Program commences (B.E.R program). |
| 2011 | Father Martin Fleming appointed as Parish Priest |
| 2015 | Principal: Mr Desmond Noack begins his appointment. |
| 2019 | Term 3: Mrs Debbie Geisler is appointed Acting Principal. |
| 2020 | Principal: Ms Bronwyn Phillips begins her appointment in Term 2. |

# Spiritual Life of the School

Religious Education is at the centre of both the formal and informal curriculum within our school. St Ambrose is characterised by a high proportion of Catholic families, teachers and students, with a visible Catholic symbolic culture and active sacramental and liturgical practices. The values, ideals and challenges of the Gospel, embodied in the person of Jesus Christ, find explicit expression in our curriculum and the ethos of the school.

An integrated Religious Education Program is realised throughout the school. The support and involvement of parents is greatly encouraged. The school follows the Religious Education Program "To Know, Worship & Love" developed by Catholic Education Melbourne.

Meaningful lessons in Religious Education are part of the school day and Gospel values and attitudes permeate all aspects of school life.

Children have the opportunity to celebrate liturgies which reflect the liturgical seasons and the life of the school. They also participate in reconciliation and prayer times as part of the school day.

The Parish, through the school, facilitates family centred First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation Programs for the children. These programs are further supported through the daily Religious Education Program.

# Our School Vision

**Centred** By **Faith**, In **Partnership** with **Community**
We Provide **Excellence** in **Learning**

At St Ambrose School, with the teachings and life of Jesus Christ as our central focus, we aspire to provide an excellent education in faith and life, within a welcoming environment. Together we nurture the Spiritual and Educational welfare and needs of the members in our Parish and School community, to foster life-long learning and their relationship with God.

## Our Aims

In partnership, we aim to provide the best education possible for your child. Specifically our aims are:

- To provide our students with the basis to develop a conscious, relationship with God in the tradition of the Catholic Church.
- To provide a holistic approach to education: body, mind and spirit.
- To provide an excellent education for our students which develops their talents and capacities to full potential and is relevant to the social, cultural and economic needs of the nation.
- To enable our students to achieve high standards of learning and to develop self-confidence, optimism, high self-esteem, respect for others and achievement of personal excellence.
- To provide a foundation for further education and training, in terms of knowledge and skills, respect for learning and positive attitudes for education.
- To provide students with the knowledge and skills to actively participate and positively contribute to an ever changing world.

## Our Beliefs

We believe that parents, students, teachers and our parish community have an obligation to co-operate to provide an environment which can be truly called a loving Catholic Community in which Gospel values flourish. It is our hope that together we will endeavor to achieve this aim to the fullest. We base our endeavors in the beliefs:

- That each individual is a unique creation made in God's image and therefore possessed of inherent dignity.
- That education is about learning what it means to be human and that in Jesus Christ we have a model of what it means to be truly human.
- That education is a means for discovering the meaning in life, of developing human potential and liberating and empowering individuals to be responsible for their lives and to contribute to the society in which they live.
- That education, shaped by the continuing search for truth, serves the true and enduring needs of our society.
- That education enables an integration of faith, life and culture.

# Sustainability and St Ambrose

At St Ambrose we encourage real-life sustainability learning. We work towards integrating sustainability into our planning as well as developing ways to improve resource management, embed sustainability practices into the school operations, teaching and learning and we encourage community engagement. We aim to give students the opportunity to learn about sustainability in a tangible and realistic environment. Our students are actively involved in learning how to take action to minimise waste, save energy and water, promote biodiversity and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We strive for continuous improvement in managing biodiversity, energy, waste and water. We are continually working to become a highly sustainable school and have completed numerous projects and have many more planned to achieve this.

# Kitchen Garden and Garden Based Learning

Our students take part in garden based learning programs where they actively learn about growing food and preparing it to eat.



# Well-being

- Our young people's well-being is pivotal to their ability to engage with educational opportunities and increasingly we inform and work on our practice to support them to work through emotional challenges.  A happy, welcoming environment where students feel safe, accepted, valued and supported to succeed, also creates more optimum opportunity for children to thrive.

- We offer some wellbeing support programs like the SEASONS for Growth program outside of the classroom for those children who may benefit.

- Student wellbeing underpins their ability to flourish. We value being well informed and equipped to support student wellbeing in order for them to be empowered and well-adjusted young people. Our staff are trained in, "The Positive Behaviours for Leaning" (PBL) model that is a whole-school approach which enables all members of our community to own model our expectations of respect, responsibility, resilience and kindness. This whole school approach teaches the expectations explicitly which then means our focus can be on learning rather than on behaviour management.



# Directory

**ST AMBROSE SCHOOL**

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|---|---|
| Principal: | Ms Bronwyn Phillips |
| Deputy Principal: | Mrs Debbie Geisler |
| Address: | 18 Templeton Street<br>PO Box 450<br>WOODEND VIC 3442 |
| Telephone: | (03) 5427 1285 |
| Email: | office@sawoodend.catholic.edu.au |
| Website: | www.sawoodend.catholic.edu.au |

**BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL CARE (OSHC)**

| | |
|---|---|
| Telephone: | (03) 54 222 767 |
| Address: | Owen Street, WOODEND VIC 3442 |
| Location: | Woodend Primary School |
| Email: | bugalugskyneton@gmail.com |

**ST AMBROSE CHURCH**

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|---|---|
| Parish Priest: | Father John Healy |
| Telephone: | (03) 54 272690 |
| Email: | john.healy@cam.org.au |
| Parish Secretary: | Bernadette Petruccelli |
| Email: | bernadette.petruccelli@cam.org.au |
| Secretary Hours: | Mon & Friday: 9.00am till 3.30pm |
| Address: | 47 Urquhart Street<br>PO Box 397<br>WOODEND VIC 3442 |

**ST AMBROSE MASS TIMES**

Please refer to the St Ambrose Parish website – www.stambrosewoodend.com.au.

**SACRAMENTAL PROGRAM**

Preparation for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation is conducted through a Parish Based Program. Refer to the School / Parish Bulletin/ Website for details or contact the Parish or School Office on the number above.

# School Times

It is essential that students arrive early enough to school so that they are prepared and settled for their first lesson. In the same way, there is an expectation that teaching staff also arrive at school in enough time so that they are able to ensure that their classroom and the learning plan for the day is well prepared, organised and resourced. The teacher's promptness in arriving at the classroom and at assembly times sets the expectation for students.

**8.30 am -** Corridors opened to allow students to access internal toilets and gather in foyer. This is particularly important on those cold Woodend mornings.

**8.45 am –** Classrooms are opened no later than 8.45am so that students are able to place bags in lockers, to prepare items for the day or have a catch up chat with the teacher. Parents wishing to speak to the teacher are asked to make an appointment.

***If a student is later than 9.00am, parents are required to accompany their child to the office to sign in as a late arrival.***

**8.55am –** Students begin to gather for Morning Prayer.

**9.00-10.55am -** Learning & Teaching Session.

**10.55am** Eat recess snack.
Classroom teachers are to check that all students are wearing school hat prior to going to play and encourage the application of sunscreen.

**11.00 am -** Children play outside.

**11.35 am -** Class begins in 5 minutes. Students to assemble outside their classroom.

**11.40-1.55 pm -**Learning & Teaching Session.

**1.55 pm -** Eat lunch.
Classroom teachers are to check that all students are wearing school hat prior to going to play and encourage the application of sunscreen.

**2.00 pm -** Children play outside.

**2.35pm -** Class begins in 5 minutes. Students to assemble outside their classroom.

**2.40 pm -** Learning & Teaching Session.

**3.25 pm -** Prayer followed by reflection on learning achievements of the day.

**3.30 pm -** End of Learning & Teaching Session. Students dismissed to go home.

**3.45 pm -** End of supervision at front of school. Any student remaining is brought into the school foyer.

# 2027 School Term Dates

Term 1 – Wednesday 27 January (students commence 2 February 2027)
to Thursday 25 March 2027

(Easter 26 March-29 March)

Term 2 – Monday 12 April to Friday 25 June 2027

Term 3 – Monday 12 July to Friday 17 September 2027

Term 4 – Monday 4 October to Friday 17 December 2027

STAFF DEVELOPMENT DAYS (Pupil Free Days)

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) formerly known as Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM) allocates a number of Professional Learning days each year for staff. On these days the school staff work together on a selected focus related to Spiritual Enrichment, Curriculum and Professional Learning.

# Facilities

At St Ambrose we take pride in our grounds and facilities and all students and staff have a responsibility to care for them. All learning spaces are air-conditioned and heated. All classrooms are equipped with e-Learning technology allowing students both access and the opportunity to explore the world through a digital medium.

St Ambrose has many other wonderful facilities:

- Spacious, dynamic, well lit and clean learning environments;
- Dedicated performing and visual arts specialist rooms;
- A well-resourced library that supports the learning and inquiring minds of our students;
- Hall - used not only for school activities, but those of the parish and the wider community;
- Healthy canteen that engages students in the development of food tech skills;
- Shaded adventure playground;
- Basketball / netball courts;
- Beautifully maintained playing grounds catering to ball games such as football, soccer and cricket;
- Vegetable garden that our students can care for whilst they learn about growing food and providing them with the opportunity to eat what they grow;
- Extensive undercover shaded areas;
- Plentiful outdoor tables and seating.

# School Administration & Finance

St Ambrose office hours are between 8.30am – 4:00pm.
Telephone: (03) 5427 1285
Email: office@sawoodend.catholic.edu.au
Website: www.sawoodend.catholic.edu.au

## CHANGE OF ADDRESS / PHONE NUMBERS / PERSONAL INFORMATION

Please inform the school office if there is any change to your telephone number and or address details. This enables us to maintain accurate records so that parents can be contacted promptly, especially in the case of an emergency.

## NFORMA

The nForma Parent Portal is a secure online platform that we use to communicate with parents to provide you with information about their child's education. Parents can use it to access student reports, log absences, view school events and calendars, complete digital permission forms, and communicate with teachers. The portal helps streamline communication and keeps parents involved in their child's school life.



## EARLY DEPARTURE

If your child needs to be collected early from school for an appointment, the teacher is to be advised at the earliest opportunity via an email or phone call to the office. On these occasions when a child is to be collected early, the parent is required to come to the office and the child will be sent to the office from the classroom. The parent is required to sign their child out on the iPad at the office.

## ABSENCES

If your child is away from school for any reason, the absence should be logged through the nForma Parent Portal.

## PARENT / TEACHER COMMUNICATION

As a school, we strongly encourage parent engagement in your child's learning and the development of positive parent / teacher relationships that enhance the learning and development of your child. If at any time you need to speak to your child's teacher, it is important that you contact the school and let your child's teacher know what's on your mind. In turn, we continually promote to the staff the need to communicate with parents regarding the growth and challenges of their students to their parents so the learning, social development and personal growth is done in a collaborative way that promotes our vision of working in partnership with the community.



# SCHOOL FEES

The school fee structure consists of a School Family Fee, a Student Levy and Camp Fee (for Grade 4 & 6 students). The School Family Fee is billed to every family and is an annual fee that supports the capital improvements and general running of the school.

The Student Levy is billed per child and covers the costs associated with the purchase of learning materials, specialist equipment, incursions, excursions, participation in sports programs and / or Sacramental programs.

We take great pride in the fact that we are able to achieve excellent educational outcomes for our students whilst providing an affordable Catholic education. In keeping our costs low and affordable, it is essential that families contribute to their child's education by ensuring that payment of the fees and levies are made each year.

**2027 School Fees & Levies**

| **Family Size** | **Family Fee** |
|---|---|
| 1 Child | $2,945 per family |
| 2 Children | $3,150 per family |
| 3 Children | $3,355 per family |
| 4+ Children | $3,565 per family |

In addition, there will be the following Levies –

**Capital Levy** is $250 per family (annually)
**Curriculum Levy** for all students is $690 per student (annually)
**Camp Levy** of $270 per student (Years 3 & 4)
**Camp Levy** of $510 per student (Years 5 & 6)
**Swimming Levy** for all students is $60.00 per student (annually)

**PAYMENT METHODS**

Family Statements will be sent home at the commencement of Term 1.

There will be two options for how and when to pay school fees which can be:

1. **Direct Debit Agreement – 10 monthly payments from March to December on the 1st of each month. A new direct debit form needs to be completed annually.**
2. **Paying in advance or paying for the whole year at the beginning of the school year**

This method is always welcome. This can be done by EFT to the bank account (details below) or in person at the school office via cash, cheque or card. Alternatively, phone the school office to pay by card over the phone.

| | |
|---|---|
| Account Name: | St Ambrose Parish School General Account |
| Bank: | CDF – Catholic Development Fund (via NAB) |
| BSB: | 083 347 |
| Account: | 82 674 8672 |

It is important that if you are experiencing financial difficulty, that you please make an appointment to discuss this with the Principal.

# Canteen

The St Ambrose canteen reflects the value the school puts on healthy eating practices for our students and the wider community. In addition to providing nutritious foods, the canteen has an important heath promoting, educational and socio-cultural role within the school utilising our kitchen garden as a source of food for learning.

For students that use the canteen regularly, the foods purchased there make a significant contribution to total food intake and nutrition. Nutrition is important to health through life and is particularly important at times of rapid growth and development, which especially includes the early years of schooling.

We offer the following lunch order service –

Wednesdays – canteen/Super Sushi (order cut off 8.30am)
Fridays – Subway (order cut off 10.30am)

***www.flexischools.com.au***

# Starting School at St Ambrose

## Your child is naturally curious. Right from birth, they are wondering and exploring.

They are watching and listening. Moving and feeling. The daily interactions and experiences you share with your children is how they learn about the world around them. These interactions involve play.

Play is a powerful and important activity. It is often said that play is the child's work and has a natural and positive influence on children's social, physical, emotional and

cognitive development. The best learning happens when children play. It is important to let your children play every day.

Children will find many things to play with inside and outside the home, and in parks and playgrounds. Being with your child and seeing what they are doing will give you ideas about the things they like to play with. All you need is imagination!

Whether it is playing dress ups, constructing grand designs with building blocks, singing songs, telling stories, playing with containers or having fun outside with sand and water – play can be built into everyday routines and activities. Let your children see you having fun too!

At St Ambrose your children will also learn through play. When your child begins school we set it up as an extension of the Kindergarten to support a smooth transition. A positive start sets the tone for success. A play-based learning environment encourages talking, reading, thinking and writing. Through this, your child sees literacy and numeracy as part of their everyday experience.



## Getting ready for school - what you can do to help

It is a big change for a five year old to pass from the intimacy of the family circle to school life. Here are some practical ways in which you can help with the transition.

Encourage:

- putting on and taking off clothes e.g. tucking in shirts, doing up buttons and putting on jumpers;
- putting on and doing up shoes, particularly laces;
- eating and drinking without help;
- using a handkerchief or tissue.

It also helps that your child knows how to:

- open and close lunch boxes and drink bottles;
- use and flush the toilet and wash their hands unassisted;
- ask clearly for things - could a teacher understand your child?;
- say his/her name and address;
- recognise name/property;
- write his/her own name;
- recognise his or her name among others.

Allow opportunity for your child to:

- play with groups of children of the same age;
- share and take turns;
- stay at a friends or relative's houses for a few hours without you around;
- care for and put away playthings;
- help with small jobs around the house - most children enjoy doing responsible tasks to please the family;
- re-tell the highs and lows of the school day if they need to;
- know what to do if parents are late;
- follow simple instructions.

Rehearse with your child, in the spirit of play, the different situations to be met within school life:

- opening and closing the school bag;
- unpacking and eating the school lunch (a sensible amount);
- listening to stories, looking at pictures and talking about them;
- greeting companions by name.

## When school has begun

Please send your child on time each day and every day so they establish a routine that will support them.

Let your child talk to you about their experiences - it is important that you share in their new life however there is no need to press them for information. Often they come home tired and are ready to focus on something else. Try not to plan too much after school, your child will be ready to go home and enjoy a quieter pace.

Be interested in things they bring home from school - talk about them, display them, treat them as something special for that is what they are to your child.

**Your child's greatest asset is the development of independence.**



# Communication

## Communicating with the School

Effective communication is essential to the proper functioning of all aspects of school life. If there any concerns or issues, please contact your child's teacher first If this has not resolved the concern, make an appointment to speak with the Principal.

## School Newsletter

This is sent home electronically each fortnight. You are also able to access it via the nForma Parent Portal and the school website **www.sawoodend.catholic.edu.au.**

This is a valuable source of information about events within our school community and a vital means of communication between school and home. It is important that parents read the newsletter carefully.

Parents are invited to contribute to the newsletter. If you or someone you know has family, cultural, sporting or other news or achievements you would like us to share and/or celebrate please forward the details in writing to the school office.

## Reporting To Parents

We have many formal and informal processes to keep parents well informed on their child's progress. Formal methods include Half Yearly and Yearly Learning Reports and family conferences. Informal communication can be through comments in books, diaries, parent/teacher meetings, a phone call, awards, and so on. Our teachers are very approachable and available, so please ring if you have a concern so that a mutually convenient time can be organised to meet.

## School Leadership Team

The school leadership team is made up of the Principal, Deputy Principal, Religious Education Coordinator, Senior School Leader, Junior School Leader & Learning Diversity Leader. Members of the leadership team play an important part in the leadership of the school. If you wish to speak to the Principal or other teachers, please contact the office to make an appointment.

### Other Important Information for Teachers

The class teacher must be informed if a child:

- has a medical appointment during school hours;
- is attending any medical specialists, eg. speech or occupational therapy;
- has to wear glasses;
- has a hearing aid;
- is under medical treatment or has a health problem that may affect their learning;
- has any food allergies;
- is to be absent for an extended period of time;
- needs to leave school early;
- has recently experienced a major upset
  (eg. family break-up, death in the family, moving house, etc.);
- is being collected by someone other than a parent or authorised friend;
- is leaving early.



# Getting To & From School

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### Parking & Road Safety

We need to take special care when parking, dropping off or picking up children, this includes:

- following all parking and road signs, especially near the crossings;
- being thoughtful and considerate towards neighbours by not parking across driveways;

- if parking on the other side of the road from the school, leave your car and cross the road with your child;
- the school carpark, located between the Church and school itself, is for staff use only;
- keep the bus bay clear as directed by the signage;
- obey all directions from the supervising teacher when on duty.

## Safety on the street

Be sure your child knows the safety rules for busy streets. Show your child how to:

- look right, then left, then right again before attempting to cross the road;
- use marked crossing if there is one nearby;
- walk quickly across the road, but do not run, take special care when getting off the bus.

## Bicycles



Students travelling to and from school need to be safe. Bicycles, scooters and other wheeled items are popular means of transport for students, but require regulation and management by parents and the school. We encourage students to choose means of transport to and from school other than cars and buses. This will encourage fitness in our students and alleviate traffic congestion and parking problems around our school perimeter and surrounding streets.

To provide a school environment that is safe for students and balances the rights of individuals with the school's duty of care towards all staff and students we encourage students and parents to comply with the following recommendations, when travelling to and from school:

- Students in Foundation to Year 4 ride bikes or scooters to school only if accompanied by a responsible adult;
- Only students in Year 5 and 6 ride bikes or scooters to school unaccompanied by an adult;
- Students wear a helmet if riding a bike or scooter to school;
- All bicycles and scooters are kept in a road worthy condition;
- Skateboards, roller blades and roller skates are not recommended means of transport to and from school; in any event, the wearing of helmets is encouraged.

## Student Attendance

Teachers will be on playground duty in the school from 8:30am. Please make sure your child gets to school **before the school music at 8:45am as students are required to be present in the classroom at 8.55am with classes beginning at 9.00am.**

It is important that you work your child's schedule to fit in with the school hours. Children need plenty of time to eat breakfast and prepare for school.

Children arriving at school after 9.00am must be **accompanied by the parent** to be signed in at the office. A late pass will be provided which must be presented to the classroom teacher before commencing lessons.

Please collect your child promptly after school at 3.30pm, otherwise they begin to worry and sometimes get anxious. If you are held up for any reason simply phone the school office. We would appreciate as early notice as possible, preferably before 3.20pm as this will allow us to let the child know in time before they are dismissed.



# Health & Safety

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### Keep a Sick Child at Home if You See the Following:

**Fever**. This is one symptom that automatically rules out school, no questions. Your sick child should be fever-free without medication for at least 24 hours before you send him/her back to school. As a school, we do not administer over-the-counter fever-reduction medication; instead, we believe that it is definitely worth keeping your child home, making sure they drink plenty of fluids so they can recover from whatever they are battling.

**Diarrhoea**. This could be a sign of a viral infection, and it is often highly contagious so keep your child at home. It is also important to keep rehydrating them with an oral rehydrating solution when they have diarrhoea, and the best way to do that is by keeping them at home.

**Vomiting**. Aside from the fact that your child won't be comfortable, they could vomit again. They could also infect other children. Keep them at home until they have gone 24 hours without vomiting.

**Cough**. This depends on how severe the cough is. Coughs can spread infection to other students. A serious cough can also keep a child from getting a good night's rest, which means they will be too tired for school in the morning. As a general rule, if your child has a serious wet cough, particularly if it's accompanied by breathing troubles, seek medical advice.

**Rashes**. Skin rashes could be a sign of a contagious infection, such as impetigo. You should have a rash evaluated by a doctor before sending your child to school.

**Conjunctivitis**. This infection can quickly and easily spread from one child to another, as many parents of primary-school age children already know all too well. Keep your child home until the doctor says they are no longer contagious.

**Stomach ache**

Stomach ache could be caused by a number of things from a virus or anxiety to food poisoning. If you suspect that your child has an infection or virus or if stomach aches persist, seek medical advice. If it is emotional, speak with your child about what is troubling them. Also have a conversation with your child's teacher.

**Ear infection**

As with coughs, you should evaluate all of their symptoms before making the call. If they have mild ear pain, they will likely be fine; but if they are clearly uncomfortable, they will have trouble concentrating in class and should be kept at home.

**Runny nose.**

Trust your instincts. If your child seems lethargic and is just not them self (if they are not interested in playing, that is often a big clue), keep them home and monitor them for any signs of illness. During these times of Covid-19 your child should not come to school if they have a runny nose.

# School Uniform & Grooming

## Uniform

The wearing of the correct full school uniform is compulsory. It gives the students a sense of belonging and pride in their school. We ask parents to insist that their children wear the correct uniform at all times. If this is not possible, please address a note to the class teacher which will be passed on to the Principal. Students who do not wear the correct uniform will be asked to explain.

## Uniform Shop

Our uniforms are supplied through Hip Pocket in Castlemaine and Melton. You may purchase directly from them as follows:

Shop - 20 Johnstone Street, Castlemaine.
Email - castlemaine@hippocketworkwear.com.au
Phone - 03 5470 5600

If emailing order through, please including the following:
- school name
- parent's name and phone number
- child's name
- uniform required - item code, size and quantity

Hip Pocket Castlemaine/Melton will contact you to arrange payment and delivery/collection.

Uniform may also be ordered through Flexischools.

Hip Pocket Uniform Catalogue.

There is also a parent run Facebook page called "St Ambrose Second Hand School Uniforms and Lost Property" if you are interested in second hand items.

## Sports Uniform

Sports uniform is to be worn on the days that they participate in Physical Education classes, interschool sporting days or days specified by the school that relates to a sporting event. Children may be required to bring sports shoes at other times as indicated in the newsletter. Sports shoes are not part of the general school uniform.

## Personal Grooming & Hair Styles

- Hair should be clean and tidy and long hair (shoulder length or longer) must be tied back (helps prevent the spread of head lice).
- Hair ribbons in school colours are allowed.
- Nail polish or any make-up is not allowed.
- For safety reasons we ask that children wear minimal or no jewellery at all to school, this also prevents the problem of expensive or sentimental items being lost.
- Children may wear a thin silver or gold chain necklace, with a cross or other religious symbol attached under their shirt line, only studs or sleepers be worn in ears and only one earring in each ear.

## School Accident / Sickness

If your child is sick or has an accident at school, the first aid officer or class teacher makes the decision as to whether you need to be contacted.

In the event of a serious accident or sickness at school, the following procedure will be followed:

1. The school will contact parents
**If the parents are unavailable:**
2. The school will ring the contact person/s nominated by Parent /Guardian
**If the contact person is unavailable:**
3. The school will contact the family doctor listed on the child's personal file
**If the doctor is unavailable:**
4. The school will always take the necessary steps to ensure the wellbeing of the child

For this reason, it is vital that you keep us up to date with home and work phone numbers. At times it is important that we inform you of an incident even if the child isn't to go home. This is so that you are aware of what has happened and can observe your child at home, e.g. your child has fallen and bumped their head. Please do not send sick children to school. This only serves to spread illness to classmates or teachers.

## Administering Medication at School

**Medication:** must be supplied by the parents in the original container clearly marked with the student's name, name of the drug, dosage, frequency of administration and prescribing doctor's name. Medications cannot be administered by staff to children without a completed medication authority form completed by a parent. For ongoing medication, the medication authority form must also be signed by an authorised AHPRA registered health/medical practitioner.

## Asthma

All students with asthma should have an asthma action plan and ensure that a copy is provided to the school. Although confidentiality is important, it is equally important that teachers and staff are aware of those students in their care with asthma or severe allergies.

All students who have asthma should be encouraged to carry medication on their person for self-administration to relieve asthma symptoms. Students should be encouraged to take their blue reliever puffer (Airomir, Asmol, Bricanyl or Ventolin) immediately should asthma symptoms develop.

## Anaphylaxis

At St Ambrose, we do not endorse the implementation of blanket food bans or attempts to prohibit the entry of food substances into the school. We adopt a Classroom Risk Minimisation approach with regard to particular foods (peanuts and tree nuts) which are the most likely foods to cause anaphylaxis. To support children who have anaphylaxis, we have a whole school approach. Please refer to our school's Anaphylaxis Policy for greater detail.

## Animal Welfare

Whilst children bringing animals to school is not encouraged, there are procedures that must be adhered to if children bring pets to show their class.

You are required to write to the Principal to seek permission, then make arrangements with the child's class teacher in advance.

The animal must be taken off school premises after the class has seen it. It may be advisable to bring the animal at the end of the day if you are unable to take it home in the morning. These guidelines are for the safety and well-being of students, teachers and the animals.

We also ask that families do not bring animals onto the school premises during arrival and dismissal times as these are very busy times with babies and toddlers around. It is simply not safe to have animals at school at this time.

## Head Lice

Head lice continue to cause concern and frustration for parents/guardians/carers, teachers and children. Head lice do not transmit infectious diseases – they are transmitted by having head to head contact with someone who has head lice. Whilst parents have the primary responsibility for the detection and treatment of head lice, the control and management of head lice infections is a shared responsibility amongst a number of agencies, including the Department of Education and Training, Department of Human Services, schools and parents. To assist us in minimising the risks and spread of head lice we ask that parents do the following:

- Regularly (preferably once a week) inspect your child's hair to look for lice or lice eggs and regularly inspect all household members and then treating them if necessary;
- Ensure your child does not attend school with untreated head lice;
- Use safe treatment practices which do not place your child's health at risk.
- Notify the school if your child is affected and advising the school when the treatment has started by email.



# Policies & Procedures

Schools need policies and procedures to provide the foundation for a safe and supportive school environment. Policies and procedures provide leadership, direction and guidance for staff, students & parents. At St Ambrose, various policies can be found relating to the following:

- Enrolment
- Curriculum
- Child Safety
- Care Safety and Welfare of Students
- Complaints Handling
- Infrastructure
- Employment
- Risk Management
- Suspension Negotiated Transfer and Expulsion of Students
- Governance
- Finance

All policies and procedures are available to read from our school website:
www.sawoodend.catholic.edu.au

# Chapter 3: Parent Involvement

## What a Difference Parent Helpers Make



Your presence, especially in the classroom can provide the teacher with valuable help in giving individual and small group assistance. In whatever way you choose to help, whether in the classroom or other school programs, you can be sure your contribution is needed and valued.

School volunteers make a difference. Mothers, fathers, grandparents, business people, college students and seniors are finding that their involvement in education is having a positive influence on student achievement. The differences are noticeable also in the morale and atmosphere in the school. At St Ambrose School, we celebrate a culture of community engagement and success, and it has earned us the status of being a highly sought after school for families within Woodend.

The following has been prepared to give you some guidance in your experience as a school volunteer. The roles and responsibilities of the school volunteer listed in this handbook will provide you with the 'basics' for making your volunteering an enthusiastic success. Some of the techniques and strategies you can use to help children learn are discussed briefly. Naturally, the teacher will always be nearby to provide directions and to answer your questions.

Please feel free to discuss any aspect of the school volunteer program with your teacher or school leadership.

# Parental Involvement

Parents are encouraged to play an active role in the life of our school. There are many opportunities for parents to assist and we hope you will be keen to offer your help in one or more of the following areas:

- Attending school prayer celebrations and liturgies;
- Assisting with classroom activities (e.g. Sport, Math/Reading groups etc.) when requested by the teacher;
- School library (e.g. covering books);
- Supporting school events such as Athletics Carnivals;
- School excursions when requested by the teacher;
- Canteen;
- Garden Club.

All volunteer workers at St Ambrose are required to undergo a **Working with Children Check** along with participating in a **Parent Helper Course** every 3 years. Without this you will be unable to participate and assist in classroom activities or excursions.

**Confidentiality** and **Privacy** are important issues for any volunteers working with our St Ambrose students.

## Parents & Friends Association

St Ambrose Parents and Friends Association operates to support the school. They are a dynamic group of parents focused on the learning, welfare and wellbeing of the St Ambrose students. Meetings are held once a term.
The aim of the association is:

- Parent involvement and participation in the life of the school
- Active support for the Parish of St Ambrose and its ministries.
- Learning and child based agendas with business kept to a minimum
- Ongoing dialogue/ feedback/ shared decision making re learning agendas at St Ambrose
- Support student learning and welfare through fundraising
- Provide services to families (eg canteen)
- Develop a culture of welcome and invitation
- Promotion of the school in building community spirit.
- Support for the learning goals and expectations of the St Ambrose school community.

## School Visitors

Due to child protection procedures, any adult remaining on the school site or working with the children on a voluntary basis will be required to sign in at the school office. They will also be required to wear a visitor's sticker and sign out when leaving the school premises. Any queries regarding these procedures can be directed to the Principal or Assistant Principal.

## You Are Your Child's First Teacher

The children are in your care for the first 5 years of their life. You then enter St Ambrose, in partnership to continue the child's learning and growth.  Learning to speak and listen starts with you at home.



Try to:

- Talk to your child about what you are both doing;
- Listen to your child carefully;
- Answer many of the endless questions;
- Read a story **every day**, maybe at bedtime;
- Borrow children's books and toys from your local library;
- Teach songs, rhymes, jingles, the names of colours and of parts of the body;
- Count things. Does your child know what the number means? Try things like asking your child to set the table and count the plates, etc.;
- Sort and match collections of things like fruit, clothing etc.;
- Ask your child to follow simple instructions such as, "Take off your shoes and put them on the verandah";
- Take some time to play with your child; find out about their ideas and feelings;
- The importance of listening to children and making them feel loved cannot be over emphasised;
- Teach them good hygiene and sanitation;
- Teach them “No means No!”.

# Becoming a Parent Helper & Child Safety

St Ambrose School believes that there are many benefits to be gained from involving parents, through partnerships between parents and teachers, and parental participation in school programs and activities.

## Aim:

The purpose of the School Parent Helper Program is to enrich and enhance student curriculum and to strengthen school-community relations.

## Volunteering Purpose:

- Parents will be invited, and actively encouraged by the Principal and teachers to be involved in a wide range of activities – classroom and specialist teacher based activities, canteen, excursions, and other special events.
- The Principal and staff have a Duty of Care to all who use or are on the school grounds. For teachers, this is mainly concerned with the physical and emotional well-being of the students. For the Principal, this is extended to cover pupils, teachers and others on school premises.
- The Principal has the ultimate administrative and operational management of the school.
- While on school premises or on school business (eg. excursions or extra-curricular programs) staff, parents, volunteers, contractors and visitors are responsible to the Principal.

## Implementation:

From time to time, parents will be issued an invitation through the normal channels of communication, asking them to volunteer their assistance. Relevant staff members will outline the nature of the work and the duration of the involvement.

In compliance with Child Safety requirements, all potential volunteers must participate in an annual Parent Helper Course. The course is aimed at assessing the suitability of the person for the volunteer position, particularly child-connected work, and assessing any possible risk to child safety. It is also an opportunity for the potential volunteer to ask questions about the role and the school in general.

The *Working with Children Act 2005* (Vic.) requires that any person doing child-related work, must have a valid Working with Children Check (WWCC). All school volunteers are required to sign the school Code of Conduct agreement, undertake the Parent Helper Course and apply for and pass a WWCC. If you do not already have a current WWCC, you will be required to obtain this prior to commencing volunteer work and present the WWCC card to the school as soon as practicable.

## GETTING STARTED:

Before starting your first volunteer task, we ask all volunteers to be aware of the following points:

- Act as a good role model for the children by being safety-conscious;
- Always sign in and out at the school office. It is very important for staff to know that you are in the building, and it makes it easier to locate you in an emergency. Always obtain a 'Visitor' sticker that identifies the purpose of your visit;
- As a courtesy to others, please turn off mobile phones while in the school building;
- Always follow the correct safety procedures during a DISPLAN (emergency drill). Follow the teacher's instructions and stay with the class you are helping;
- If you are taking food into our school, please check with the classroom teacher because some food may be inappropriate for children with food allergies.

## Confidentiality

To make sure that students, staff and families feel secure, we all need to respect privacy. This is also a legal concern. Because individuals can be harmed by inappropriate disclosures, volunteers must be careful to honour confidentiality**.** Breaching confidentiality can be hurtful to children, their families and the staff. It can also harm the good reputation that our St Ambrose volunteer parents have earned over the years.

Perhaps one of the greatest obstacles in the path of effective use of volunteers, especially parent volunteers, is the worry on the part of teachers and administrators

regarding the possible misuse of privileged information. Once anyone begins to work in a school setting, they become privy to knowledge about children's behaviour patterns, academic ability, emotional maturity, relationships with others, etc. In some cases, information of this nature is imparted in order that the volunteer might work more effectively with the child. In other cases, it is simply acquired in the course of frequent contact in the school.

In addition, volunteers are in a position to learn more about staff members than would normally be learned from their 'public image'. One also forms personal opinions about the professional competency of the individual teachers and administrators. There is nothing wrong with the volunteer possessing such knowledge and arriving at personal conclusions. However, this knowledge or these opinions should never be shared in the community or with anyone who has no legitimate need to know. Similarly, care must be taken not to make comments harmful to the reputation of any pupil, professional or other volunteer. If problems develop, the line of communication regarding a situation in the school is always first with the staff member concerned and then, if necessary, with the Principal.

A volunteer has every right to expect that his or her participation will be treated with the same confidentiality and respect.

## Disclosure of Possible Abuse

In Victoria, it is the legal obligation to report any suspected case of child abuse. If a child indicates to you that they have been or are the victim of abuse, or you have strong suspicions that a student may have been abused, inform the child's teacher, Principal or Assistant Principal.

One of the most difficult things to handle may be when the student asks the person in whom they have confided to "promise not to tell". A volunteer cannot make such a promise and should be clear about that to the child. Don't try to 'counsel' the child. Remain merely an empathic 'listening ear' without being judgmental or trying to offer solutions. Assistance and counselling should come from those professionals with the responsibility and experience to provide it.



## HOW CHILDREN LEARN

Children learn by doing, by asking questions and by searching for answers to their questions. They learn by discovering and experimenting. They learn by using all their senses when possible. They learn by sorting and combining objects and ideas. They learn by repeating experiences. They learn by building confidence in themselves. Children learn behaviour by observing people they respect.

### How You Can Help Children Learn

1. Let children participate in activities as frequently as possible.

2. Ask children questions that may lead them to the correct answer instead of telling them directly.

3. Let children explore and discover by themselves.

4. Encourage children to feel, smell, taste, talk and listen, as well as look at objects.

5. Let children try new methods of doing things even though you already know an easier way.

6. Let children sort and combine according to their own ideas.

7. Let children observe you as a model for appropriate behaviour (sharing, showing respect, talking quietly, taking turns, etc.).

8. When speaking to children:

    - Praise their good efforts;
    - Use a tone of voice that will encourage them and make them feel confident;
    - Avoid comparing children and their work;
    - Give children a choice only when you intend to abide by the choice;
    - State directions in a positive form ("We use blocks for building" rather than "Don't throw the blocks").



## Code of Ethics

In order to promote volunteerism at St Ambrose School, it is essential that all school volunteers:

- **Have a positive attitude**. Please come to school with an attitude that says: "I'm glad you asked me to help you," and one that will say to the boys or girls you may be working with: "You are so special. I'm glad I have an opportunity to work with you." Also, please be positive about our teachers and staff. The school environment is not the place for negative talk and gossip.

- **Be dependable**. The teachers are counting on you!

- **Communicate**. We want your volunteer work to be a learning activity for you. If you have questions please ask the appropriate person (the teacher, Principal or volunteer coordinator).

- **Maintain Confidentiality**. You may see a paper with a score or comment relating to a child. Please remember that any information pertaining to a child must be left in the classroom. As volunteers, we do not want to be responsible for sharing any information that might be detrimental to a child.

    - Classroom and student work is always confidential. Please don't discuss student problems with anyone except the teacher.
    - Try not to compare children within the classroom.
    - Since there are as many different methods as there are teachers, please do not compare different methods of teaching. There is no one 'best' way to do anything.
    - Work positively for the good of the school. Constructive criticism should be directed only to the supervising teacher or school administrator.

| What a Parent Helper Does! | What a Parent Helper Does not do! |
|---|---|
| Praises and encourages | Berates or belittles |
| Tells the child good things about him or herself | Acts in a cold or indifferent manner |
| Tries to understand how the child feels | Criticises the teacher |
| Commits to regular attendance and arranges own parent substitute if necessary | Fails to call and let school know he or she is going to be absent |
| Builds caring and supportive rapport | Gets physical with a child |
| Speaks directly to teacher about any concerns regarding student performance | Violates confidentiality by passing on information to the community |
| Is considerate of teacher's time | Loses control and says something that is inappropriate or might be regretted |
| Makes a difference in a child's life! | |

# PARENT HELPERS AS MENTORS

## A 'Position of Trust'

Volunteers who work in one-to-one relationships with students have a unique opportunity to help our students build feelings of competence and self-esteem, thus creating an environment for enhanced achievement. However, with opportunity comes responsibility. As a student begins to realise that there is someone who does care and who takes personal interest in them, that student may show increasing trust in a Parent Helper. It is essential that nothing happens to damage that trust.

## This means that the volunteer must:



- Be genuine and a role model for the student.
- Accept the student as an individual.
- Follow through on all promised commitments.

## EFFECTIVE WAYS TO WORK WITH CHILDREN

- Be warm and friendly - learn the children's names and show interest in what they are doing and telling you. You are very important as a listener.
- When working with children, encourage them to do their own thinking. Give them plenty of time to answer. Silence often means they are thinking and organising what they want to say or write.
- If you don't know an answer or are unsure of what to do, admit it to the children and work it out together. Feel free to ask the teacher for help when you need it.
- Use tact and positive comments. Encourage children and seek something worthy to compliment, especially when children are having difficulties (catch them being good!).
- Accept each child as they are - you do not need to feel responsible for judging a child's abilities, progress or behaviour.
- If a child is upset, encourage them to talk the problem over with you. You need not solve the problem but, by listening and talking, you help the child feel you care.
- Respect a child's privacy - if a child or teacher reveals personal information about a child, regard it as a confidence. Keep it confidential!
- Maintain a sense of humour.

- Be consistent with the teacher's rules for classroom schedules and behaviour.

- Wear appropriate clothing for your role (smart, clean, casual) and don't hesitate to get down to a child's height.

- If parents and friends ask about what you do at school, tell them you enjoy working with the children and discuss the activities you do rather than specific information about the child, the teacher or the school.

- Keep your commitment. The children expect you and look forward to you coming. If you know you will be gone, tell them in advance.

## CHILD SAFE STANDARDS: 3 - CODE OF CONDUCT

### Principles for adult's behaviour in undertaking child-connected work

These principles are a guide to an adult's behaviour when undertaking child-connected work at

St Ambrose School:

- the adult/child relationship should be professional at all times
- an adult's response to a child's behaviour or circumstance should be commensurate with the child's age and vulnerability and the adult's responsibility for the care, safety and welfare of the child
- an adult should not be alone with a child unless there is line of sight to other adults
- an adult should not initiate or seek physical contact or contact with children outside school.

### Acceptable and unacceptable behaviours

As of January 27th 2021 we have taken on the Positive Behaviours for Learning model where we have taken on Respect, Responsibility, Resilience and Kindness as our behaviour expectations of all who are members of the St Ambrose community.

The followings lists provide examples of statements about acceptable and unacceptable behaviours which are included in our school's code of conduct. The list is not intended to be exhaustive, but assists us in ensuring a high standard of professional conduct that reflects the high expectations of our parents and community at St Ambrose.

## Acceptable behaviours

All staff, volunteers and members engaged in the service of our students are responsible for supporting the safety of our children by:

- adhering to the school's child safe policy and upholding the school's statement of commitment to child safety at all times
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- treating everyone in the school community with respect
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child's self-identification)
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination)
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, during personal care activities)
- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not alone with a child
- reporting any allegations of child abuse to the school's leadership (or child safety officer if the school has appointed someone to this role)
- understanding and complying with all reporting obligations as they relate to mandatory reporting and reporting under the *Crimes Act 1958*
- reporting any child safety concerns to the school's leadership (or child safety officer if the school has appointed someone to this role)
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe
- reporting to the Victorian Institute of Teaching any charges, committals for trial or convictions in relation to a sexual office by a registered teacher, or certain allegations or concerns about a registered teacher.

## Unacceptable behaviours

Staff and volunteers must not:

- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse
- develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children)

- exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example inappropriate sitting on laps)
- put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors)
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities)
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
- discriminate against any child, including because of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or disability
- have contact with a child or their family outside of school without the school's leadership or child safety officer's (if the school has appointed someone to this role) knowledge and/or consent or the school governing authority's approval (for example, unauthorised after hours tutoring, private instrumental/other lessons or sport coaching). Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is appropriate.
- have any online contact with a child (including by social media, email, instant messaging etc.) or their family (unless necessary e.g. by providing families with e-newsletters or assisting students with their school work)
- use any personal communication channels/device such as a personal email account
- exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking sites or email addresses
- photograph or video a child without the consent of the parent or guardians
- work with children whilst under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs

