



Parent Code of Conduct

Purpose and applicability

This Code has been developed so that parents¹ are aware of and can meet Toowoomba Catholic Schools' (TCS) expectations during their interactions with the school², its staff members, other parents and students.

Adherence to this Code is important to promote positive and productive relationships within school communities, and to promote a safe, orderly and disciplined learning environment for students, and workplace for TCS staff.

TCS aims to complement and build on the work of the family so that all students can pursue their potential and affirm their sense of belonging and importance in a supportive environment.

You, as a parent of a child enrolled at a TCS school, are obliged to observe the following in accordance with the Enrolment Agreement for your child or children.

Responsibilities within the Catholic Church

Diocese of Toowoomba Catholic schools are led by the Bishop of Toowoomba and are a ministry of the Catholic Church. The Bishop delegates responsibility for the administration of Toowoomba Catholic Schools to the Executive Director: Catholic Schools.

The mission of TCS is 'academic success in a distinctively Catholic community'. By enrolling your child in a Catholic school you join a community that recognises parents as first educators and the importance of the partnership of parents and the school in achieving this mission.

As parents, your choice of a Catholic school, also means that you agree to support the Catholic ethos and your child's participation in the religious life of the school including liturgies and retreats.

Responsibilities of parents to the school

Schools are responsible for establishing and administering policies, procedures and rules which govern their day-to-day operations. TCS has also established and published a number of policies and procedures on its website which are to be read in conjunction with the school's own policies and procedures.

At enrolment, parents agree to recognise and respect these policies, procedures and rules, adhere and have their children adhere to them, and support decisions that are made as a result of their implementation. This includes adhering to this Parent Code of Conduct. Parents act as role models of appropriate behaviour for their children.

Below are some of the necessary standards of conduct and behaviour that are universally expected of parents across the TCS network of schools.

Respecting others

Communications whether verbal or in writing with other members of the school community should

- be respectful, courteous and considerate
- not harass or bully another person
- not use inappropriate language and
- not be confrontational.

Parents are not to approach other members of the school community (whether teachers, administration staff, other parents or students) in an accusatory manner.

In demonstrating respect for others, parents are to refrain from making derogatory or offensive comments or statements about the school or any individual connected with the school in any public forum, including online platforms and on social media.

¹ The term 'parent' refers to parent, carers, legal guardians and people who exercise parental responsibility for a child.

² 'School' refers to a primary, secondary, or combination of both school or college.



Interactions with staff

Regular meetings are conducted between staff and parents. These meetings are an appropriate forum for a student's progress to be discussed. There may be other times when a parent or staff member requests a meeting to discuss particular matters that have arisen during the course of a student's schooling. As part of the parent/school partnership parents are expected to attend such meetings as requested. We understand that life outside of school can be busy. We will make reasonable efforts to find a convenient time to meet. Such meetings may need to be held in school time to ensure that relevant staff can attend.

If a parent wishes to meet formally with a staff member, they are required to make an appointment at a mutually convenient time. Parents should not contact a staff member at their home, or outside of stated work time, unless the staff member makes this request. Staff will respond to appropriate communication when they are reasonably able.

Parents must engage in a respectful way with all staff members and ensure their communication is professional and appropriate. Where communication intensifies staff work hours or workload, we reserve the right not to respond to every item of correspondence. As a guide, we suggest that emails be limited to one page.

It is important that parents show respect for staff and not publicly criticise them, the school or TCS. Actions which attempt to undermine staff, the school or TCS may constitute a breach of this Code. If a parent has a particular concern about a staff member or the school, they may contact the staff member or the principal. They may contact TCS following the TCS Resolution of complaints procedure.

When making a complaint, parents are required to comply with this Code (see Resolution of complaints section), and ensure complaints are made in good faith. Complaints which are found not to be made in good faith may amount to a breach of this Code.

Good faith means: to act honestly, fairly, reasonably, in accordance with the law and TCS contracts and policy, with a genuine belief in the truth of the matters alleged.

Complying with the law

Privacy

Parents are to uphold the privacy of individuals' personal and health information as required by the Privacy Act (1988) and the Australian Privacy Principles. This includes maintaining appropriate confidentiality of information that is shared with them in relation to their own child's academic, physical, social, emotional and spiritual development to uphold their personal dignity as members of the school community.

Parents are also to ensure that any confidential information that is overheard is not shared in a manner that will compromise the dignity or reputation of the individual or the school.

Work, health and safety

The school has a duty of care to staff, students and visitors. Parents play a part in maintaining a safe and orderly learning environment and workplace.

To ensure that schools can support your child or children, parents should share all relevant information about medical conditions or needs, disabilities, social or emotional conditions, special learning needs, required adjustments or other conditions with their school as soon as the information is available, or on request. The sharing of information enables the school to consult, consider and implement reasonable adjustments. Such information is needed to ensure safety, as far as reasonably practicable. All people who engage with our community, including staff, students, other families, contractors and volunteers, whether at school, remotely or through social media, are asked to consider the safety of others. Where the school and TCS is obliged to ensure physical and psychological safety, as far as reasonably practicable, the school and TCS will not accept conduct by parents which puts safety at risk.

Principals have the right to exclude parents (and other members of the community) from the school grounds and events who breach this policy, who are aggressive, abusive or behave in a manner that compromises the health and safety of any individual student, teacher or other member of the school community.

Planning for personalised learning is a key strategy of our schools in supporting the additional requirements of students. Adjustments and intervention strategies for these students are determined using personal and health information shared by parents, staff and external professionals.

Under the Privacy Act (1988) letters, emails, meeting notes and conversations related to this decision making should only be shared with those that are required to have access to support the student. Sharing via social media or other public platforms is inappropriate and a breach of privacy.

Conflict of interest

Parents are to comply with TCS's Conflict of interest declaration policy.

This generally means that parents should not benefit (personally or professionally) from connection to the school or TCS. For example, it would not be appropriate for a parent to supply food for the school BBQ from their business unless such conflict has been cleared by the principal.

Behaviour of students

To ensure the safety of others, students are expected to comply with school rules and not engage in behaviour which is harmful to others including other students and staff.

Parents are expected to do all that is reasonably practicable to support the school and its decisions regarding student conduct.

Parents are further expected to support the school in implementing any Student Behaviour Support Plan and to work with the school to provide any remedial measures which might be identified to support a child.

In the case of minor behaviour breaches, the school will determine the process for managing such matters; will make decisions about factual matters relevant to the conduct; and will determine a proportionate response. Such matters are not appealable or reviewable.

In relation to more serious behaviour breaches, (including but not limited to conduct which impacts on the health and safety of others, persistent and continued minor breaches, failure to adhere to a Behaviour Support Plan, conduct which may affect the school's reputation or may require a report to be made to the police) as identified by the school, may result in suspension or exclusion. The school will inform parents of the alleged conduct and will manage the conduct in accordance with the school's policies and procedures. While parents will be consulted about the alleged conduct, findings and proposed outcome, the final decision maker for suspensions is the principal and the final decision maker for exclusions is the Executive Director: Catholic Schools. Such decisions are not appealable or reviewable.

Parents can access the TCS Resolution of complaints procedure for matters relating to the process leading to a decision to suspend or exclude a child.



Extracurricular activities and student leadership

Parents are welcome to attend and contribute to extracurricular events and activities organised by the school. Parents and community members are expected to behave respectfully, courteously and safely at these events and activities. They should not abuse, threaten or otherwise seek to intimidate officials, participants, other parents or any school representatives. They are expected to follow directions from school or TCS staff and are to conduct themselves in a way that is safe and respectful of others.

Staff members responsible for the selection of sporting, cultural, spiritual and leadership groups make decisions in the best interests of the whole group. Such decisions are not appealable or reviewable.

Separated families

Where parents of a student are separated or divorced, subject to Court Orders or Parenting Agreements, the school has a responsibility to treat each parent equally. Parents are expected to act with honesty and integrity and not attempt to involve the school in any parental dispute that may arise.

The school is not able to make judgements on the merits of claims made by one parent against another and should not be asked to do so. Nor should the school be asked to take any action which would or is designed to disadvantage one party.

It remains the responsibility of the parents to comply and observe any Orders.

Where parents are separated and/or a Court Order is in place, the school will not act as an intermediary for non-school related activities (eg for the delivery of messages, gifts or visitation opportunities). These activities are to be arranged between parents without school involvement.

Resolution of complaints

TCS recognises that complaints are an important way to ensure transparency and allow parents and others to provide feedback. The Resolution of complaints procedures support individuals to raise issues as and when they arise, in a timely way.

When making a complaint, parents and others are to comply with the procedures and this Code and to ensure complaints are made in good faith.

Where necessary, a complaint may warrant being directed by the parent or a staff member to the relevant principal to act in accordance with the Resolution of complaints procedures.

Complaints must be made in a respectful way and not by the use of rude, abusive or harassing language. This is not productive and can make it harder to resolve concerns.

Only where a complaint has been addressed through the school's Resolution of complaints procedure and has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the parent or principal can the Toowoomba Catholic Schools' Resolution of complaints procedure be called upon.

Failure to observe this Code

If a parent fails to observe this Code the school and/or TCS may

- limit their access to a teacher or other members of staff*
- limit their access to the school premises or sporting, cultural, artistic or other school events* or
- terminate the enrolment of the child/ren.

Please note: Dependent on the severity of the breach, and the reasonably foreseeable risk to safety, the decision to implement any one of the restrictions or termination may be immediate. Such decisions are not subject to appeal or review.

Related documents

The TCS Parent Code of Conduct is supported by the TCS Parent Engagement Charter and TCS Employee Code of Conduct. Parents agree to the TCS Parent Code of Conduct and TCS Parent Engagement Charter at enrolment. School staff agree to the Employee Code of Conduct when signing their employment contract.

All documents are available through each school and the Toowoomba Catholic Schools website.

* In accordance with the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 Section 346

