



Tunable Falls Community School

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POLICY SUMMARIES

Dear families,

Being an independent parent-run school, we are able to create a school environment that focuses on the areas that are most important to us.

We have the freedom to incorporate strong beliefs such as environmentalism and sustainability into our curriculum. We can also choose to ignore state school rules – such as, ‘no tree climbing’, ‘no bare feet’ – that we feel impinge on letting children be themselves.

However, there are a variety of policies and procedures in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the students at our school. Included below are excerpts from the following policies for parents to review:

- Attendance Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Disputes Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour and Discipline Policy

Sincerely,

The Management Committee

Attendance Policy

Why coming to school every day is so important for your child

So why not be relaxed about attendance? While we fully understand the importance of travel, special occasions, even occasional rest days, we also know how vital regular attendance is for each child's learning and social development.

Does regular attendance really matter?

- Being in class every day, allows children to build incrementally on their learning. They are less likely to feel overwhelmed. Consistency makes it easier for them to absorb new knowledge and move to the next level in their abilities.
- Children, who are frequently absent, tend to fall behind their classmates which can lead to ongoing self-esteem issues. Regular attendance is even more critical for a child who is struggling with an area of work. Practising every day with their teacher and aides will help this child overcome learning hurdles more quickly.
- Socially, children who are often absent can find it more difficult to maintain friendships or to feel fully part of the class or school. Frequent absences may make school seem scary when the child does attend.

If your child often does not want to come to school, please speak to us. Together, you and your child's teacher can identify the underlying reason and work together to address it.

Because absences due to illness are inevitable, we ask that families are committed to regular attendance the rest of the time to ensure that their child's education and connection to the school does not suffer.

What to do if your child is absent

Unexpected absence

Please call or email the office by 10am to let us know the reason that your child is absent. It is important that we know that you are aware your child is not at school.

- Sickness or medical appointment
- Inability to attend (eg car broken down)
- Special family occasion (eg wedding, religious festival)
- Family emergency

If a child is absent for five days and we have not been able to speak with the family, we are required to initiate a procedure that eventually culminates in a report to the school liaison officer.

Low attendance or repeated lateness

If your child's attendance is below an acceptable level, or absences/late arrivals are impacting on their education, we will ask you to meet with your child's teacher. Together we can identify the causes of absences and develop a plan to improve attendance.

In the unlikely event that a family refused more than two requests to meet or attendance continued to be low with no evidence of efforts to improve, we are required to implement our procedure which ultimately leads to the student being unenrolled and the family reported to the Department of Education and Communities liaison officer.

Planned absence

If you know ahead of time that your child will be away from school, please let us know by calling or emailing the school (less than 5 days) or completing an *Exemption from attendance request* form (over 5 days) for review by the committee and teachers.

A committee member and/or your child's teacher will contact you if they feel an extended absence will be harmful to your child's education. In this situation, we will work with you to develop a reasonable solution.

We believe travel is a wonderful opportunity for learning outside of school and support families who choose to take children out of school for this reason. It may benefit some children to take work with them so that they do not fall behind their classmates. For others, an activity, such as a travel journal, can help them maintain their skills. Your child's teacher can provide ideas.

Child Protection Policy

This policy applies to all staff members, which includes employees, contractors and volunteers.

There are different forms of child abuse. These include neglect, sexual, physical and emotional abuse.

Mandatory reporting

The Care and Protection Act provides for mandatory reporting of children at risk of significant harm. A child is a person under the age of 16 years and a young person is aged 16 years or above but who is under the age of 18, for the purposes of the Care and Protection Act.

Under the Care and Protection Act mandatory reporting applies to persons who:

- in the course of their employment, deliver services including health care; welfare, education, children's services and residential services, to children; or
- hold a management position in an organisation, the duties of which include direct responsibility for, or direct supervision of, the provision of services including health care, welfare, education, children's services and residential services, to children, are mandatory reporters.

All teachers are mandatory reporters. Other staff members may also be mandatory reporters. Any queries about whether other staff members are mandatory reporters should be directed to the Coordinator.

Reports to Communities and Justice

A mandatory reporter must, where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child (under 16 years of age) is at risk of significant harm, report to the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) as soon as practicable. The report must include the name, or a description, of the child and the grounds for suspecting that the child is at risk of significant harm.

In addition, the school may choose to make a report to the DCJ where there are reasonable grounds to suspect a young person (16 or 17 years of age) is at risk of significant harm and there are current concerns about the safety, welfare and well-being of the young person.

In the independent school sector, a mandatory reporter will meet their obligation if they report to the Coordinator in the School. This centralised reporting model ensures that a person in the school has all of the information that may be relevant to the circumstances of the child at risk of significant harm and addresses the risk of the school not being aware of individual incidences that amount to cumulative harm.

Reportable conduct

Under the Children's Guardian Act 2019 *reportable conduct* is defined as:

- a sexual offence
- sexual misconduct
- an assault against a child
- ill-treatment of a child
- neglect of a child
- an offence under section 43B (failure to protect) or section 316A (failure to report) of the Crimes Act 1900; and
- behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.

Parents, carers and community members

Parents, carer and community members are encouraged to report any conduct that is in their view inappropriate, reportable or criminal conduct to the Coordinator or their delegate. All such reports will be dealt with in accordance with the School's complaint handling procedures.

Disputes Policy

Member Disputes

In the event of conflict arising among members of the school community then;

- a) The issue should be taken up with the person(s) with whom the conflict is perceived to exist, by the person who finds him or herself in conflict to resolve if possible.
- b) If the conflict has not resolved at this point the committee must be informed that a conflict exists and both parties should choose a committee member, with whom they feel comfortable, who will work to help them sort out conflict among themselves.
- c) If this process fails to resolve the conflict then any of the parties can request mediation from the committee in the form of a letter briefly outlining the issues and requesting mediation. Mediation will then be organised via the CJC. Both parties should choose whomever they wish to be present as a support person. The Mediation process with the CJC is then followed with the parties involved.
- d) Once mediation has been completed, a mediation report is made to the committee about the nature of the conflict and how it was resolved and the committee will pass any resolutions required.

Student Disputes

Because of our concern to ensure that all individual rights are being respected we ask all members of the school community to ensure that issues and disputes involving students at the school are dealt with through the proper channels via contact and communication with the class teacher.

****We emphasise that under no circumstances should the member take the dispute directly to the children or the parent of that child, as the proper process ensure that the children's right to feel safe in their learning environment is respected and that they are communicated with appropriately in this situation. ****

In the event of conflict arising between students at the school, or if a parent at the school has concerns about another student at the school then;

- a) We ask that the Class Teacher of the children involved be approached and the situation discussed with them 1st.
- b) The Class Teacher will work through with the children involved to resolve the issue and work through the parents and children's concerns.
- c) The Class Teacher will then liaise with the parents and children concerned about the resolution of the issue.
- d) If the teacher or the parent feels that the conflict has not been resolved they can approach the committee with their concerns and mediation will be organised to resolve the issues.

Mediation Procedure

In the event that the school's internal disputes process not working the next step is to engage in the mediation process. The school places the emotional and educational wellbeing of all its students as its highest priority and this underpins all mediation and negotiation processes.

The School has determined to use the Mediation services offered through the CJC (Community Justice Centres).

Community Justice Centers provide free mediation and conflict management services to help people resolve disputes. Funded by the NSW Government as part of the Department of Justice & Attorney General, the services are confidential, timely, easy to use and voluntary. They provide services throughout New South Wales.

Anti-Bullying Policy

The term “*bullying*” has a specific meaning. This policy sets out expectations for preventing and responding to bullying between children. We have other policies, such as the *Behaviour and Discipline policy*, that apply to the children’s general problematic behaviour.

Families who are not happy about a way that an incident of bullying has been managed, should make a written complaint to the management committee. Our *Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures* sets out a standard procedure for evaluating and responding to a complaint.

For matters involving bullying towards employees or volunteers, refer to the *Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy for employees, contractors and volunteers Policy*.

What is bullying?

Bullying is repeated behaviour that uses superior power to humiliate, intimidate or harass another. It can focus on race, religion, appearance. It can take different and multiple forms.

- *Verbal*: name calling, teasing, abuse, putdowns, sarcasm, insults, threats, verbal abuse, etc.
- *Physical*: hitting, punching, kicking, poking, scratching, tripping, spitting, repeated damage of belongings, etc.
- *Covert/social*: ignoring, ostracising, alienating, inappropriate gestures, lying about someone, playing nasty jokes that lead to the target being humiliated or powerless, deliberately excluding, etc.
- *Psychological*: spreading rumours, dirty looks, hiding or damaging possessions, threatening, manipulating, etc.
- *Cyber*: using technology such as email, social networking sites to bully verbally, socially or psychologically, and inappropriate use of a camera phone.

Bullying is NOT fights between equals, mutual disagreements, not liking someone, single incidents of nastiness or children not getting along well.

Prevention

We aim to create a safe, caring and supportive environment, where children are taught positive social skills, by:

- Teaching and modelling respect, friendliness and care through the curriculum and in our behaviour.
- Listening respectfully to students and providing opportunities for student voice.
- Celebrating our own diversity, and teaching for and about diversity generally.
- Encouraging the children to be assertive and to act as positive role models.
- Acknowledging positive behaviour.

Strategies to deal with bullying

The school ***Behaviour and Discipline Policy*** applies in all cases of inappropriate behaviour, including bullying. Failure by a student to modify their bullying behaviour ultimately leads to suspension in accordance with policy. In all cases of suspension, parents are advised of their appeal rights. In extreme cases, there may be meetings regarding expulsion if there are no changes in bullying behaviour and students are at risk.

The school has a range of strategies to deal with different types of conflict and bullying when they arise.

Fundamental to our policy is that students and parents will report all incidents of bullying. Specifically:

- Incidents of bullying may be reported to any member of staff.
- Parents should contact the school's Coordinator.

Behaviour and Discipline Policy

We aim to provide the children with clear and firm boundaries within which they may learn safe and effective ways of expressing themselves. The foundations of this policy are each child's right to be safe and to learn while at school. Bullying in any form is dealt with seriously and immediately – refer to our *Anti-Bullying policy*.

The management committee and teachers believe a positive approach to guiding behaviour is best for confidence and self-esteem. Our goal is to teach the children to behave with thought, care and respect towards each other, the staff and their families.

When people "act out", "misbehave" or disrupt social relationships this is a symptom of feeling out of balance or not centred, or internally struggling (eg. to sit still). Underlying causes may include miscommunication, misunderstandings, feeling tired or bored, or issues not directly connected to an incident. We take misbehaviour and break downs in communication as opportunities to learn more about ourselves and each other and as an

opportunity to practice community (or restoring balance). Adversity is an opportunity for building resilience for everyone involved.

We understand discipline as being less about teaching students how to follow rules and more about teaching students to listen to themselves and each other and their underlying motivations, encouraging a deeper understanding of:

- how our own behaviour affects others,
- how to become more self-aware and
- how to process feelings in a productive and nurturing way in order to restore balance and connection within ourselves and with others.

Leading by example is central to our approach to discipline and behaviour.

We prohibit the use of corporal punishment in disciplining students. We also do not sanction ridicule, name-calling or physical punishment by any adult, including parents, as a means of discipline at the school.

We encourage families to work with us to support children who are struggling with behavioural issues. We will always provide families with details of any incidents and action taken upon request.

When relevant, it is also worth referring to the following policies.
Please contact reception to access copies.

- Fees Policy
- The School Constitution
- Code of Conduct
- Community Use of Facilities Policy
- Complaints Handling Policy,
- Discrimination and Harassment Policy
- Disability and Special Needs
- Disputes Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Excursion Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Staff and Volunteers Handbook
- Flood Policy
- Guests and Visitors Policy
- Medical Treatment of Students Procedures
- Reporting Policy
- Social Media Policy