



DOC20101 STAC EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS

Introduction

St Thomas Aquinas College believes that all community members play a valuable role in the life of the College and have the right to feel safe, secure and supported in their school. The College appreciates that parents & guardians are the primary educators of their children and that family involvement in the College community can foster a healthy partnership between home and when Christian principles are respected. Therefore, members of the St Thomas Aquinas College community are expected to uphold the Catholic ethos of the College at all times by modelling the College's core virtues of Charity, Hope, Prudence and Justice.

Parents & Guardians fulfil this responsibility through respectful communications in their interaction with College teachers and staff involved in their child's education. This includes supporting the College's procedures in matters of punctuality, late arrival, absence or early departure, conduct and dress standards.

Expectations

1. St Thomas Aquinas College, as an independent school, relies on the payment of school fees to survive. Parents & Guardians who have chosen to send their child/ren to St Thomas Aquinas College have a moral obligation to pay their school fees on time. In the event of family hardship the College should be notified in a timely manner so that due consideration can be given.
2. Parents and Guardians are the primary carers and important role models for students at the College. For this reason, they must act, at all times, as a positive role model for all children while interacting with others on the school grounds or at school functions.
3. With the exception of genuine illness or family bereavement students must attend school every day of the year therefore family vacations should never take place during College terms. Parents should seek prior approval for any absences that do not involve illness or bereavement.
4. Students are expected to be at the College from 8:25am to 3:10pm. Students should not be removed from College except for important appointments that could not be made outside of College hours, illness or injury. Picking students up unannounced from 2:45 pm or picking students early to avoid traffic is not acceptable to the College. Parents are expected to assist the College in getting children to school.
5. Smoking is not permitted anywhere on the College grounds or at College functions. The College does not tolerate community members being under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs at any College related events.
6. While on College grounds or attending College functions, all parents will comply with the College's Visitor Code of Conduct. If engaged by the College as a volunteer, all parents must comply with the College Volunteer's Handbook and Code of Conduct.

Communication

All members of the College community including staff, students and parents are entitled to feel respected and safe. Written and spoken communications, whether in person, via telephone or via the internet, must be guided by the virtue of Christian courtesy and discretion. The College welcomes fair and constructive feedback for improvement, however, disparaging, harassing, or offensive language will not be tolerated.

Appointments with staff need to be arranged through email. Appointments with the Deputy Principal or Principal need to be made through the College Executive Assistant.

Parents & Guardians should find an appropriate time to approach staff if they have concerns or questions. This should take place after school at a time previously arranged. Therefore arriving at the College and insisting on speaking with a member of staff without an appointment is not practical nor encouraged.

Involving other Parents & Guardians in College incidents that affect your child or contacting other Parents & Guardians with a complaint against their child is not appropriate nor acceptable. Such concerns should be addressed to the relevant Dean of sub-School who will follow up on behalf of the parents or guardians concerned.

Ethical Conduct:

When attending the College or any College event, the College expects parents to:

- Refrain from engaging in malicious or judgemental gossip (either directly or online) and ensuring that anything they say about others is fair and truthful;
- Refrain from behaviours and actions that constitute bullying, harassment, discrimination or vilification;
- Refrain from offensive, insulting or derogatory language or conduct. This includes wearing clothing with offensive words or insignias;
- Dress according to the standards of Catholic modesty;
- Not take photos or video recordings of any student while attending College events;
- Not post a video or photo of a child that is not their own on social media;
- Disclose personal details of a student or parent of the College to another parent without the express consent of the other parent;
- Not smoke on the College grounds or within 4m of any entrance to the College grounds;
- Not consume or possess alcohol at school events (unless the school has sanctioned the consumption of alcohol at the event);
- Not attend school events if affected by alcohol or other intoxicants; and
- Show proper care and regard for school property and the property of others.

Feedback

The College welcomes constructive feedback but does not tolerate public criticism over the internet. Therefore social media must never be used to air one's concerns about a student, staff member or the College in general. Such concerns must be addressed to the College in confidence and not on a public forum. Parents & Guardians choosing to use social media to attack another member of the College or the College's reputation will not be tolerated by the College and may result in legal proceedings.

The Use of Social Media

Despite the range of positive uses of social media, parents must be mindful that there are also a number of ethical and legal issues associated with its use. These issues can directly or indirectly affect the welfare of staff members, students and other parents and the College's broader reputation.

When using Social Media, the College expects parents:

- (a) Not to make contact with any student (other than their own child) using any forms of social media. This is a breach of the College's Child Safety Policy and may be considered 'Grooming' in accordance with the Victorian Crimes Act 1958 S49m;
- (b) Not post images or videos of other students (including in the background) as this is a breach of privacy laws;
- (c) Not discuss or mention the school, its staff or any members of the school community in a negative or defamatory way;
- (d) Be respectful to staff, volunteers, other parents, and/or students;
- (e) Not use social media as a means to voice grievances about members of the staff, other students or other parents;
- (f) To make reasonable efforts to ensure their children comply with the school's Child Safety, Acceptable Use and Social Media policies;
- (g) To never disclose any confidential information relating to other parents, staff members, volunteers, and/or students to third parties without that individual's express consent;
- (h) To never post material that may damage the reputation of the College.

Complaints

The College takes seriously any issues brought to its attention. If parents express their concerns to the College, they can be expected to be treated with courtesy and respect in order to try to resolve the matter. All grievances and complaints are handled in accordance with the College's Complaints and Grievances Policy. This is available through Parent Lounge.

As a general guide, minor issues should be raised with the child's teacher. Cases of a more serious nature should be brought to the attention of the relevant Dean of sub-School or the Deputy Principal.

The College will endeavour to investigate serious complaints in a timely manner and report its findings to parents as soon as possible.

Breaches of STAC's Expectations

The consequences for breaching one of the College's Codes of conduct, or does not comply with the expectations outlined in this document, will be at the discretion of the Principal or Deputy Principal and may result in the following:

- a. The parent may be directed to restrict communication with members of staff through a nominated College Representative.
- b. Mediation sessions may be organised by the College
- c. A parent or parents may be banned from attending an activity
- d. A parent or parents may be banned from being on the College grounds
- e. In the case of an extreme or prolonged breach of this Code of Conduct by a parent or guardian the College may:
 - contact relevant bodies to take action against the parent (eg lawyers, police, DHS)
 - terminate the enrolment of the child or children in their care.