

## Parents and Carers Engagement in Schooling Policy

### 1. PURPOSE

At East Bentleigh Primary School we believe that Parent/Carer participation:

- 1.1 Enhances social and educational outcomes for children
- 1.2 Enhances communication between classrooms and homes
- 1.3 Allows schools to benefit from socio-cultural and linguistic diversity that children and parents bring to schools
- 1.4 Enhances understanding of parents/carers and the public of school activities
- 1.5 Provides schools with a broader resource base from which to draw in providing learning opportunities and services to children and families
- 1.6 Increases participation in decision-making in the community
- 1.7 Enhances community spirit and cohesion.

### 2. GUIDELINES

The aim of this policy is to:

- 2.1 Promote parent/carer participation in a diversity of roles to support children's education
- 2.2 Provide a framework for effective partnerships with parents/carers at East Bentleigh Primary School
- 2.3 Affirm parents/carers participation as a highly desirable component of East Bentleigh Primary School
- 2.4 Acknowledge parents/carers as first educators of their children and their right to participate in their children's schooling.

### 3. SCOPE

The scope of parent/carer involvement enables the planning of more inclusive strategies to enhance parent/carer participation. It acknowledges the rights of parents/carers to have their opinions respected and considered, including the need for sensitivity to the rights and roles of adults with different caring responsibilities. The scope covers:

- 3.1 Parenting Responsibilities: the basic parenting responsibilities that support children and which are central to a child's successful participation in schooling.
- 3.2 Learning at Home: participation and support in general developmental learning and in school work at home.
- 3.3 Communication: formal and informal communication between home and school about school programs, activities and student progress. Communication is a two way process and is one of the most basic elements of supporting home-school partnerships.
- 3.4 Volunteering: the traditional, visible and highly valued form of parent/carer participation in schools. It includes helping in classrooms and other areas of the school and fund raising.
- 3.5 Decision Making: the involvement of parents/carers in decision-making at various levels on school council and committees.
- 3.6 Community: Parents/Carers support students and schools through active roles in community organisations. Examples are sporting organizations or service clubs.

### 4. PRINCIPLES

- 4.1 All parents have knowledge, skills and resources that support their children's learning in school and parents have a strong complementary role to play in their children's learning and behaviour.
- 4.2 Parent/Carer participation is very important to student achievement and school success. Effective partnerships between schools and families foster student learning and contribute to the general climate

and development of schools. Comprehensive parent/carer participation is valued and encouraged at East Bentleigh Primary

## **5. IMPLEMENTATION**

The School aims to acknowledge, encourage and extend parent/carer participation by:

- 5.1 Creating an environment in which the participation of all parents/carers in schools and student learning is welcomed, where teachers and parents treat each other with mutual respect and where differing views and opinions are considered and discussed with a view to finding solutions
- 5.2 Involving parents/carers in decision-making at the school by consulting with parent/carer representatives on education policy, school development issues, including parent/carer representation on committees and advisory groups;
- 5.3 Encouraging parent/carer participation as volunteers to support schools and classroom activities.
- 5.4 Promoting relevant, accurate and timely communication between schools and families about student progress, all aspects of school programs and policies with respect for the diversity and differing needs of families;
- 5.5 Developing school programs and strategies that encourage and assist parents/carers to actively participate in their children's education both at school and at home;
- 5.6 Connecting children and families with community and support services where appropriate
- 5.7 Supporting and promoting programs and activities designed to develop parenting skills
- 5.8 Providing information about the benefits of parent participation and enhancing the skills of teachers and parents in developing effective home-school partnerships.

## **6. RESPONSIBILITIES**

**The responsibilities of the Principal in relation to parent/carer participation is to:**

- 6.1 Establish a school environment that welcomes and encourages all parents to raise questions, participate in school activities and volunteer their services in a variety of ways
- 6.2 Ensure that parents are treated as collaborators in children's learning
- 6.3 Ensure that parent views are sought in developing policies and addressing school wide issues and that parents and their representatives are involved in decision making processes about school policies and programs
- 6.4 Ensure a school wide approach to communication with parents about school policies, programs, activities and reporting on students that is frequent, clear and two way

**The responsibilities of teachers in relation to parent/carer participation are to:**

- 6.5 Acknowledge that all parents have positive strengths that contribute to their children's learning
- 6.6 Respect the diversity of family backgrounds and cultures and their contribution to children's learning
- 6.7 Encourage parent involvement in their children's learning, both at home and at school and provide advice to support that environment
- 6.8 Provide clear and timely information to parents about the achievements and progress of their children and provide regular opportunities for two-way dialogue about progress.
- 6.9 Promote activities that require parent volunteers or participation

**The responsibilities of Parents/Carers:**

- 6.10 Parents/Carers need to comply with all relevant policies, procedures and guidelines, and the Principal's directives that pertain to visitors when they enter a school.
- 6.11 Where possible actively support school programs and activities that aim to enhance the learning or learning environment of the children at East Bentleigh Primary School (for example by volunteering for excursions, cooking, gardening or working bees)
- 6.12 Parents/Carers who have issue with decisions taken by class teachers or principals should attempt to resolve these at the school level in the first instance. Should resolution be unachievable, the issue(s) should be resolved according to DEECD's procedures for resolving complaints.
- 6.13 Parents/Carers who, in the course of their participation, become a party to confidential information must agree not to divulge the information to any other person.

## **7. SPECIFIC ROLES FOR PARENTS/CARERS AND RELEVANT ACTIVITIES**

The headings of this section relate to the scope section of the Parents/Carers as Partners in Schooling policy.

### **7.1 PARENTING**

These activities increase families' understanding of their children as students and also increase schools' understanding of families.

- Information Nights on key parenting topics
- Workshops, videotapes, online messages on parenting and child development at each age and grade level
- Family support programs to assist families with health, nutrition, and parenting

### **7.2 COMMUNICATING**

These activities include school-to-home and home-to-school communication about school and classroom programs and students' progress:

- Develop a communication policy for the school
- Develop a complaints/grievances policy so that parents have clear guidelines to address these issues in the school
- Clear information to parents/carers about selecting programs and activities within the school
- Clear information on all school policies, programs, reforms, assessments and transitions
- Information Packs for parents/carers that include school telephone numbers, important meeting dates, school policies
- Parent noticeboard in the school
- Focus groups for parents to discuss issues related to the school
- Use of interpreters/written translation for non-English speaking background families
- Interviews between teachers, parents and students about student progress
- Phone calls and other communication by teachers to parents
- Provide opportunities for students to become key participants in communicating within their families about their learning eg. Learning journeys
- Family Fun and Learning Nights that help families understand school programs
- Parents and students invited to become members of school committees to review curriculum or school policies
- Class Representatives

### **7.3 VOLUNTEERING**

These activities involve families giving their time and talents to support schools, teachers and students by:

- Direct classroom activities
- Assisting with school excursions
- Involvement in class programs
- Fundraising
- Training for volunteers where appropriate
- Annual survey to identify interests, talents and availability of volunteers
- Class parents, telephone tree, or other structures to provide all families with required information.
- Participating in working Bees to upgrade/enhance the school learning environment

### **7.4 LEARNING AT HOME**

These activities provide information and ideas to families about the academic work students do in class, how to help with homework and other curriculum-related activities and decisions. Teachers can assist parents/carers to support their children in a range of ways with learning at home by:

- Providing assistance to parents/carers on how to support the experiences, interests and skills children develop in the home context

- Encouraging some homework that involves students in interaction with families and/or community members.
- Ensuring homework is not always based on family involvement for those students who do not have assistance at home
- Promoting shared reading programs between parents and students
- Supporting parents by providing them with information about how they can develop a learning culture within the home
- Helping parents and carers recognise that the home environment and the broader community provide children with many and varied learning experiences
- Sharing information on how to assist students with skills they need to learn
- Preparing a school brochure for parents on how to develop a learning environment at home

#### 7.5 DECISION-MAKING

These activities enable families to participate in decisions about school programs by:

- School Council membership
- Distributing draft policies/issues papers to parents for feedback
- Forming a parent / teacher group through an existing or new structure to consider a range of school issues
- Networks to link all families with class representatives
- Where appropriate, including student representatives alongside parents in decision-making

### **8. COLLABORATING WITH THE COMMUNITY**

These activities facilitate cooperation and collaboration among schools, families and community groups, organisations, agencies and individuals. This is a two-way process whereby community resources assist schools. Educators, families, parents/carers and students help their communities by:

- 8.1 Where appropriate, operating Community services sessionally, or permanently from the school
- 8.2 Inviting community services/government agencies to talk about their service to groups of parents/carers
- 8.3 Ensuring staff has up-to-date lists of community agencies for families
- 8.4 Displaying examples of individual students and classes' work and discussing these with parents/carers
- 8.5 Providing information for students and families on community health, cultural events, recreational activities, social support and other programs/services in newsletters, noticeboards etc
- 8.6 Encouraging ex-students and their parents/carers to participate in school programs
- 8.7 Seeking opportunities for School-Family-Community Partnership activities
- 8.7 Promoting mentoring programs using community members
- 8.8 Looking for opportunities for students to work supportively within the community (eg with aged persons)
- 8.9 Involving students in neighbourhood projects
- 8.10 Providing opportunities for the community to use school space and/or facilities

### **EVALUATION**

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis.

This Policy was ratified by School Council in ....

November 2012