



1. BACKGROUND

There is much research to show that encouraging the engagement of families in all aspects of school life significantly enhances development and educational outcomes for children. Family engagement can take many and varied forms including but not limited to: supporting school work at home, volunteering in the classroom, communicating between home and school, having discussions with teachers, assisting in school activities and being involved in the governance of the School. Effective partnerships between schools and families foster student learning and contribute to positive climate and operation of schools and their students. At Williamstown Primary School we recognise the critical role that families play in enhancing the educational outcomes of students and are committed to supporting and encouraging the involvement of families at the School.

2. PURPOSE

The aim of this policy is to:

- Reinforce the vital role families play in their children's education.
- Establish procedures and practices at the School that facilitate the engagement of families in a friendly, comfortable school environment.
- Encourage and maximise the number of families participating in School activities.
- Provide and identify opportunities for family involvement in School life.
- Provide the necessary knowledge and support for families through educational programs, so families can positively contribute to education in the home.
- Provide avenues to address issues and concerns in relation to family participation.

3. DEFINITIONS

"Family" means a student's immediate family, including/but not limited to primary carers, grandparents, aunts and uncles.

"Family participation" includes:

- parenting responsibilities: the basic parenting responsibilities that support children and which are central to a child's successful schooling.
- learning at home: involvement and support in general childhood development and in school work at home.
- communication: formal and informal communication between home and School about the School curriculum, activities and student progress. Communication is a two way process and is one of the most basic elements of supporting home-school partnerships.
- volunteering: the traditional, visible and highly valued form of family participation including classroom helping, assisting with excursions/incursions, fundraising and other working parties (such as Friends of Willy).
- decision making: the involvement of families in strategic decision-making through, for example, the School Council.
- community: family members supporting students and the School through active roles in community organisations such as sporting organisations.

“School” means Williamstown Primary School.

4. PROCEDURES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 The School’s Approach

The School has identified three key ways to support and facilitate family engagement:

- Communication & Promotion;
- Support & Training; and
- Recognition.

4.2 Communication and Promotion

The School will regularly communicate with families and promote family participation and opportunities to become involved, through such means as:

- its weekly newsletter (Williamstown Primary News);
- term-by-term curriculum outlines;
- information sessions
- one-on-one meetings;
- Class Representatives;
- School Council reports, policies and decision updates;
- special School activity events and days such as the Easter Hat Parade, Footy Day and the Mothers and Fathers Day stalls;
- electronic communication;
- weekly School assemblies, and
- the School’s website.

The School is committed to ensuring that the lines of communication between families and the School are clearly established, open and well communicated so that all families are aware of these avenues and feel they are able to raise concerns and issues, make suggestions or offer constructive feedback in an accepting environment. Where issues are raised, these matters will be dealt with in the most appropriate manner for the specific circumstances. This may be directly with a teacher or parent, team leader and/or the Principals or School Council.

4.3 Support and Training

Families wishing to become involved in volunteering opportunities at the School such as classroom helping, attending excursions, the swimming program or a camp will be provided with appropriate training/orientation. This will enable them to understand their role and to provide clarity about what is expected and how they can positively contribute to the School’s activities.

Some volunteering activities at the School may require a current Working with Children Check (WWCC) Card. For further information on which activities require a WWCC Card, the support and training provided to volunteers and compliance procedures when volunteering, refer to the School’s Volunteers & Visitors Policy.

4.4 Recognition

The School will always endeavour to make families who participate and are involved in School activities feel welcome and appreciated. Teachers and students are encouraged to acknowledge and thank those who participate in activities such as classroom helping or excursions. The School will also regularly acknowledge the

contribution of families informally and, at the end of the School year, formally thank families for their contribution to the School throughout the year.

4.5 Participation

There may be occasions where positions for volunteering opportunities are limited (such as camps and excursions). The final selection of volunteers remains at the discretion of school staff, who will make an informed decision based on a variety of considerations (such medical, social, etc.) for the particular occasion.

5. REVIEW AND POLICY HISTORY

This policy is due for formal review in August 2017 although it may be changed at any time as required after discussion with School Council and the Principal.

Policy History:

Version Approval Date	Summary of Changes
September 2011	Comprehensive review
August 2014	Update