Teacher Assistant Deployment Policy

Rationale:

Maryborough Education Centre, (MEC), is committed to student learning, central to which is effective teaching, delivered by trained teachers, using appropriate curriculum. Effective teaching for students with special education needs is best achieved by utilising the expertise of relevant people to develop teaching plans and programs for the particular student. Those collaborating on such plans could include the student, parents or caregivers, teachers, special educators, teacher assistants, executive teaching staff and/or allied health professionals. Therefore the role and responsibilities for teacher assistants should be clearly defined within the context of a collaborative team, particularly in inclusive settings where the classroom teacher responsible for a student may not have special education expertise.

A recent five-year UK government-funded research project, Deployment and Impact of Support Staff (2009) found teacher assistants have untapped potential that could be released if they were to be used in different ways to those that are commonplace. Recent advice from the Australian Association of Special Schools and the Department of Education Legal Division has initiated the writing of this Teacher Assistant Deployment Policy.

Many teacher assistants working under the supervision of a trained teacher provide effective teaching and important personal care to students with special education needs. They also work with other students or on other tasks in order to support the classroom teacher in the delivery of educational programs. It is crucial however that the teacher takes responsibility for educational planning and decision making and actively supervises and trains the assistant to ensure optimal outcomes for students on the Program for Students with a Disability.

Goals:

- To ensure that students with special needs have access to high quality support through researched based interventions that make the most effective use of teacher assistants.
- To support teaching staff to offer excellent education delivery students including those with special needs.
- To allocate individual Program for Disability funds to students with special needs in a way that promotes their academic and social, independence and growth.
- To provide guidance to leadership and teaching staff about the most productive manner in which to deploy teacher assistants.

Guidelines:

- TAs will be deployed as set out in the Australian Association of Special Education guidelines
- TAs will work under the direction of, and in collaboration with an appropriately qualified educator and/or special educator
- TAs will respect confidentiality protocols at all times
The TA is one valuable avenue of support for some students with special education needs. An appropriately trained and supported TA working under the supervision of a teacher can implement effective interventions and programs so support learning.

Responsibility for all students must remain with the class teacher. The teacher assistant is to work under the direction of, and in collaboration with an appropriately qualified educator and/or special educator.

TAs should be assigned to support a classroom, that is the teacher and all students including the student with special education needs. TAs are more effective if their role is conceptualised as supporting the teacher and all students in a class.

Roles and responsibilities of teachers and TAs should be clear and unambiguous, with the TA working under the direction of a teacher. Instructional decision-making lies with the teacher. It is not appropriate for aides to take responsibility for decisions about curriculum or teaching strategies.

We train and endeavour to retain competent TAs, and such training is integrated with that of teachers.

Regular and special educators will receive professional development to enable them to plan for, work with and supervise TAs as effectively as possible. Professional preparation of teachers contains the collaborative and management skills needed to work with a TA.

Mentoring opportunities should be formalised as an essential component of professional development for teachers and TAs. Further professional development of TAs is the responsibility of leadership, teachers and more highly qualified TAs.

The TA supports the class, not the student. Research shows that it is more appropriate to assign a TA to support a teacher and a whole class that contains one or more students with special education needs.

TAs will be strategically deployed to add value to teacher’s role rather than replacing it.

To support students with special needs, teachers will work with an individual or groups of students requiring extra support while the TAs assistance by roving around the classroom.

Teachers and TAs should develop strategies and tools to help students become independent learners e.g. IPad for VI, cheat sheets for Intellectual Disabilities.

Teachers share lesson plans with TAs prior to the lesson taking place.

TAs will be trained in ‘Talk’ with students i.e.: Talk less, give students time to respond.
• TAs will be trained in questioning frameworks to help student remain in charge of own learning

• TAs promote student independence by giving self-help strategies

• TAs will be deployed as set out in the Australian Association of Special Education guidelines

• TAs will work under the direction of, and in collaboration with an appropriately qualified educator and/or special educator.

Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities of TA’s include:

• Administration work
  • Assisting teachers with preparing and delivering activities
  • Assisting therapists with individuals or groups of students
  • Assisting with personal care and medication of students
  • Carrying out teacher-planned activities with individuals and small groups
  • Implementing behaviour management plans designed by teachers
  • Only use their own private vehicles to transport students to school events or activities where there are no other available transport options and where all the policy requirements have been met
  • Organising and maintaining classroom resources and the general classroom environment
  • Collect information on student progress
  • Provide basic physical and emotional care for students such as toileting, meals and lifting
  • Provide duty of care to students they are working with, taking all reasonable steps to prevent reasonably foreseeable harm to students, just like any other staff member working with a student.
  • Take a student with a disability on an excursion or out of the school for a principal or school council approved activity. There may be local excursions to shops or travel training to teach life skills which TAs may undertake with students without a teacher (even though the responsibility for the student and their educational program remains with the teacher).
  • Take a student with a disability out of the school for a principal or school council approved activity to assist them with travel-training or accessing transport. The key steps that a principal may wish to take involve appropriate training for the TA through accreditation, eligibility assessment and post monitoring training to identify and plan to mitigate any risks
  • Undertake yard duty. TAs have the same duty of care to students as teachers. If TAs are rostered on to yard-duty, there should be:
    • an equitable distribution of yard duty time across all staff, including teachers
    • access to unpaid lunch breaks of 30 minutes
    • a teacher available nearby
    • an awareness of procedures including roaming the full area that they are supervising, monitoring specific students who are known to be at risk and following any other school requirements in relation to yard duty
acknowledgement that TAs who provide support for a disabled student may not be available to contribute to yard duty and the general supervision of students.

- Work 1:1 or in small groups with a student or students away from the class/classroom without the direct supervision of a teacher for particular school activities so long as the responsibility for the student(s) and their educational program remaining with the teacher.

Excluded Roles and Responsibilities

- Assist students and their families for private activities outside of school hours and not related to school events or programs. As with all staff, involvement with children or their families after school hours for which the families pay a fee, reward or other benefit is usually discouraged due to the potential for conflicts of interest.

Suitability for Employment

It is the responsibility of the principal to ensure that only suitable and eligible persons are employed in the school. Prior to employing a person, the principal must be satisfied that the person meets the required Suitability for Employment Checks. See Suitability for Employment Policy: http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/Suitability_for_employment.pdf

To maintain high standards of conduct and professionalism in our school, MEC will ensure that the Department's procedures for criminal record checks are implemented. http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/employcond/Pages/crimcheck.aspx

MEC will adhere to the Department procedures for the conduct of criminal records checks for all school-based employees, including arrangements that allow for the acceptance of the criminal records check conducted by the Victorian Institute of Teaching and WWC Checks to meet the Department's pre-employment suitability for employment requirements.

Working with Children Check

The WWC Check is a minimum checking standard set by the Working with Children Act 2005 for those who work with children, either on a paid or voluntary basis. It checks for serious sexual, violent and drug-related offences as well as disciplinary findings of professional agencies such as the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

To be a volunteer at MEC a valid Working with Children Card provided by the Department of Justice is required. This card is:

- valid for 5 years
- transferable between volunteer organisations
- free of charge for volunteers, but cannot be used for paid employment.

Note: WWC Checks for paid employment can be used to show suitability for volunteer work.

Maintaining records

A copy of the staff member's WWC Check will be kept on the file at the school.
MEC will implement procedures to ensure staff members hold a valid WWC Check card; at a minimum annually at the commencement of the school year.

It is the responsibility of the staff member to:
- provide MEC with the successful WWC Check card prior to commencement
- notify the principal if there has been a relevant change in circumstances, for example, if they have been charged or found guilty of a new relevant offence or if their WWC Check has been suspended.
- apply for a new WWC Check before their card expires.

For a full list of exemptions and examples refer to: Working with Children Check – Exemptions

Privacy

MEC will apply privacy principles when collecting, using, retaining or disposing of personal or health information in accordance with the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic) and the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic).

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school’s 3-year review cycle.

This policy will be ratified by School Council on Wednesday 22nd February 2017.

Signed:

[Signature]

Paul Rumpff
School Council President.