MOUNT OMMANEY

SPECIAL SCHOOL

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Mount Ommaney Special School
Mount Ommaney Special School Vision

To provide engaging, relevant curriculum and innovative, specialised teaching in partnership with families and the community in a safe, supportive environment

Our Values and Beliefs:

- Every student will be provided with high quality educational programs that are relevant and appropriate to their needs.

- Educational programs will be student centred, individualised, specialised and embrace innovation.

- Contemporary teaching practices, built from evidence based research, are most effective when collaboration and reflection occur.

- Students benefit from a holistic approach to education that enables them, builds personal independence and promotes self-esteem.

- Students learn best in an environment that is not only safe, supportive, healthy and respectful but one that promotes a sense of fun and enjoyment.

- The principles of equity and social justice will drive decision making. Difference is respected and celebrated.

- All members of our community, including students, staff and families are learners working collaboratively as a team.
Welcome to Mount Ommaney Special School and Early Childhood Development Program

Mount Ommaney Special School caters for students who present with a wide range of both physical and intellectual impairments and complex medical needs. Our campus is located at 94 Capitol Drive, Mount Ommaney and consists of:

- Six teaching blocks, each containing two or four classrooms
- Early Childhood Development Program consisting of three classrooms, a multi-purpose area and an adventure playground
- A multi-purpose area, which houses a heated hydrotherapy pool, a life skills area, sensory room, a kitchen, an adventure playground and the nurse’s station
- A Resource Centre, which also contains a multi-media room
- The administration block including the Principals’ office, the Deputy Principals’ office, Head of Curriculum’s office, the therapy room and a staff room

The school operates on a trans-disciplinary model to develop and implement programs that enable students to achieve their maximum potential. As such a variety of professionals and para-professionals are employed. Our school emphasises the importance of meeting the needs of individual students. This goal is achieved through the implementation of Individual Learning Plans. These are developed through a close working relationship between the parents and the school staff.
Curriculum at Mount Ommaney Special School

Mount Ommaney Special School has a multi-levelled approach to curriculum and is tailored to the needs of individual students.

The school is divided into the following curriculum sectors and teaching teams.

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Volunteering at Mount Ommaney Special School

At Mount Ommaney Special School, the classroom staff consists of a teacher, teacher aides and volunteers.

Volunteers at our school have participated in a wide variety of activities including:

- Classroom programs
- Hydrotherapy & Learn to Swim
- Bike riding programs
- Community access programs
- Gym and Gross Motor
- Horse riding

As you can see many of these programs require a high adult to student ratio. Therefore, volunteers play a very important role within our school. With your assistance students are more easily able to access several activities.

It is advisable to bring a packed lunch when volunteering with us, as there are no canteen facilities. There are, however, several local shopping centres nearby.

Volunteering at
Mount Ommaney Early Childhood Development Program (ECDP)

Our Early Childhood Development Program is an integral part of the MOSS campus. The program caters for children with special needs from birth to five years. Volunteers will assist in the delivery of early intervention educational programs for young children who have moderate to severe impairments across a range of disabilities. Programs are held on a sessional basis between Monday and Friday. Activities are similar to those incorporated in a regular kindergarten program and will involve bending and lifting. Volunteers will also have the opportunity to assist in therapy sessions with our Physiotherapist, Occupational Therapist and Speech-Language Pathologist.
Before You Start Volunteering

Please go to the Administration office on arrival. The Education Program Officer (EPO) will meet with you and organise day/s and times that are suitable to you. During this meeting you will be asked to complete an application for a ‘Blue Card’ (over 18’s only). Volunteering cannot commence until the Blue Card arrives. If you already hold one a photocopy will be taken. In addition to this you will be asked to fill in a general information sheet.

Your First Day

Upon arrival you will need to sign the volunteer book located in the administration area. You will then be introduced to the Teacher and Teacher Aide/s and be given a short brief on the daily routine of the class and any other relevant information. Feel free to ask questions about the program in which you are involved. Take your time and join in the activities when you feel comfortable. Remember first days can be quite daunting!

It is also a good idea to familiarise yourself with the phone system and school and departmental policies.

What We Expect From You as A Volunteer

Although a friendly environment there are some general ideals that we would like our volunteers to adhere to. Most notably is confidentiality. While in the classroom/school you may become privy to certain information. Any personal information about the class, and in particular our students, must be treated in a confidential manner. Respect must be shown to students at all times and staff are requested not to talk about the students in a disrespectful manner.

During class time you will be expected to follow the teacher and teacher aides’ advice when working with students. Please seek clarification if you are unsure. This is very important as each student is unique and therefore may require different manual handling techniques, mealtime programs and behaviour management strategies.

It is also important to limit social conversations during class time (including student mealtimes) remember this is still student learning time. Excessive talking can prove confusing to many of our students. We also discourage the use of mobile phones in the classroom. As a volunteer we understand you may need to take personal calls. However, it is preferable to keep your mobile phone in the staff area of the teaching block and check it intermittently. If you need to take a call please leave the classroom and inform the other staff.
Importantly we encourage you to enjoy your experiences at our school.

Please contact the school on 3717 6888 if you are unable to attend on your designated day.

**What You Can Expect From Us When Volunteering**

At Mount Ommaney we aim to make all volunteers feel welcome. You can expect to be treated with respect and as a valued member of staff, and we will endeavour to make your time at the school an enjoyable experience.

For ongoing support while volunteering at our school your contact person is Jim Green, who acts as the volunteer co-ordinator. Please see Jim if you need any assistance while volunteering, would like to re-arrange your voluntary days or change classes.

As a volunteer you may learn new skills, such as sign language. You may also make new friends and contacts.

Voluntary work can also provide future job seekers with practical experience in working with students with disabilities. We will be happy to provide a reference stating the skills you have gained while volunteering at MOSS.

Most of all you can expect to have a great time working with our wonderful students.

We have placed in this booklet information about communication that you may find useful whilst volunteering at our school.

Good Luck, and Welcome to Mount Ommaney Special School.

Kerrie Reid, Education Program Officer
Kreid125@eq.edu.au
Communication

One of the most powerful ways to communicate is through language. There are several ways in which we use language to communicate.

These include:

- Satisfying a need or want (e.g. “I want a drink”)
- Controlling (e.g. “Give it to me”)
- Initiating or maintaining contact with others (e.g. “Hi, let’s go outside”)
- Expressing opinions or feelings (e.g. “Yuk! cabbage”)
- Questioning (e.g. “How’s this go?”)
- Commenting on an experience (e.g. “The music is great”)

Expression by students at Mount Ommaney Special School is frequently not conveyed through speech. Their speech is delayed as a result of hearing, visual, physical and/or intellectual impairments. The messages are conveyed by methods of communication which are natural supplement to speech. This includes actions such as facial expression, eye gaze and movement. Our goal for developing communication is for all students to exert some influence over the environment and to achieve some independence.

At Mount Ommaney Special School, we utilise a set of general strategies for promoting communication which includes:

- We give students the opportunity to express real choices, needs or preferences. An example is offering the student a choice between colours. The response may vary from a gesture to looking or vocalising.
- We give students the opportunity to request or refuse objects or events when possible. An example is asking “Do you want to go to the toilet?” When given that opportunity we respect the student’s response.
- We set up unpredictable events within a family’s routine. For example, the student is given a sandwich without taking off the plastic. We wait for a communicative response.
- We set up opportunities for problem solving by individual students. For example, we place a toy out of reach and the student has to obtain the object.
- We set up and participate in joint action routines. These are structured activities in a turn taking game. A wide range of communicative behaviours are targeted depending on the routine/activity.