

Back 'o' the Band Behaviour Code



PARENTS

Parents play an invaluable role in Banding. Occasionally, however, some become over emotional and abusive. It's important that the inappropriate actions of a few parents don't ruin the Banding experience for everyone else.

Information to help you understand the issue

Angry parents:

- sometimes can be bullying, use foul language and make threatening remarks directed at the conductor, Band management or other Band members and parents, etc...
- have a "My Child is infallible and the only priority" mentality
- diminish everyone's enjoyment.

Inappropriate behaviour by parents can result in:

- children withdrawing from Band.
- general reduced membership.
- fewer people willing to volunteer for admin and official positions; and/or
- an increased risk of legal action.

When good parents turn ugly

Where would junior Band be without mums and dads? Who would ferry children back and forth between rehearsals, concerts and events, help out with equipment, work at fundraising events and make sure players arrive on time wearing their uniforms and with instruments ready?

We all know that, if not for mums and dads, we would struggle to find enough volunteers to make the whole Band work. It would make finding the volunteers who contribute so much to our major State and National event volunteers and administrators much more difficult, and our concert halls would be bare. Without a doubt, they are an invaluable resource and an essential part of any Band.

But what about those parents who turn ugly? You know the type. They make comments that undermine the confidence of other members, abuse the conductors and administration (who are often volunteers), challenge contest results, become abusive if their child isn't given the best position or seat in band. It happens.

So what can we do about it? What role do conductors play? How about Band administrators? How can parents successfully tread that line between supportive and aggressive?

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General Tips for mums and dads

- Be a good role model. Children watch and learn from you, so make sure you set a good example.
- Avoid a 'win at all costs' attitude. Although you may think winning is important, the focus for junior Bands should be on fun, learning, skill development and growing together in music.
- Be aware that your abusive behaviour may be against the law. Ask yourself, 'Would my mother be upset or offended by what I am saying or doing?' If the answer is yes then it's best to sit down and be quiet.
- Try not to be critical of conductors, volunteers and administrators or adjudicators. Many are volunteers who give their time to make Banding possible for all our children. If you have some constructive advice for them, leave it until after the rehearsal or have a chat with the Band administration or conductor or pop a constructive email to the Association Secretary.

A few basic tips for parents, particularly at Contests and Events:

Encourage fair play

- Watch, Cheer, support and acknowledge the contribution of all the Bands and their members competing or participating at a contest or other event
- Thank the officials, volunteers, Band administrators and conductors / tutors and other Band members who are participating.

Respect officials, Volunteers, Conductors and Administrators and opponents

- Accept decisions by Adjudicators – they are always well educated and professionals in their field and will often be listening for things that you may not be aware of.
- Deal with issues in a controlled and professional manner after the event.

Keep your emotions in check

- Be enthusiastic, but keep it positive and supportive but, under control
- If you don't like something or disagree with a result, Don't get into a shouting matches with anyone
- Never use bad language or harass others.

Uphold your band's code of conduct

- Understand, uphold and support your Band's code of conduct for parents.
- If you have put your hand up to be a volunteer it's important to understand the functions of your role, the relevant rules and regulations, the spirit of the event and the relevant codes of conduct.

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Help kids enjoy Banding

- Emphasise trying hard, playing at your best, learning and having fun, not only winning
- Never ridicule or yell at a child for making a mistake.
- Always act in ways which promote positive environments in Banding.

Tips for Conductors, Band Administrators and Event Volunteers

- If the abuse is directed at you try to stay calm, maintain your professionalism and explain that you will discuss the issue with them during a break or after the rehearsal, concert or event. Do not accept or ignore abusive, offensive or foul language.
- If an official is the focus of the parent's abuse, you should try to defuse the situation. Talk calmly to the parent, acknowledge their frustration, work to follow any volunteers instructions and at a contest, emphasise that the results decisions have been made and that the decision must be respected. You can refer to your Band's code of behaviour and explain the penalties if the behaviour continues. Make sure you report the incident to the relevant Band administrator, or the BANSW (if at a BANSW event) preferably in writing.
- If the abuse is directed at children or a child playing in your Band or in another Band, don't ignore a parent who verbally abuses their child on the grounds that 'it's none of my business'. Speak to the over-enthusiastic parent privately before their behaviour gets out of hand — this will often prevent the situation escalating. Highlight the positives and emphasise the need to identify children's strengths, not their weaknesses. Emphasise that children are there to have fun, develop skills and build their confidence. Remind the parent about the Band's code of behaviour. Explain what may happen if the behaviour continues, based on your Band's membership rules and policies report the incident to the Band's administrator or, if at a BANSW event, the BANSW Secretary if the behaviour continues and you foresee a future problem.

A few basic tips for Conductors and Band administrators at Contests or events:

Conductors and Band administrators can help create a positive environment and reduce poor behaviour at Contests and other events by being good role models. To do this they can:

- Respect opponents, audience members and officials
- Thank the officials and other Bands after the contest or event – teach your players to do the same.

Uphold your Band's code of conduct

- Understand, uphold and support your Band's code of conduct for Band Administrators and Volunteers.

For Conductors of junior Bands, it's also important to help kids enjoy Music

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- Emphasise trying hard, playing at your best, skill growth and learning and having fun, not only winning.
- Never ridicule or yell at a child for making a mistake.
- Take a look at our [Guidelines for working with children](#) information sheet. This will help you with strategies to manage potential problem situations with young people.
- Communicate with parents - arrange a pre-contest / concert/ event meeting to discuss expectations.
- Always greet and welcome parents.

Respect officials

- Accept decisions by adjudicators – they are usually professionals in their field and they are often listening for things which you may not be aware of.
- Deal with any issues in a controlled and professional manner after the contest or event.
- Understand that yelling at officials, particularly verbal abuse, can have serious ramifications for your Band and the movement, not least on the harm it is doing to young Band members.

Rewarding effort in Banding

One of the easiest, but often overlooked, things that encourage a positive Banding environment is to remember to reward effort, particularly in junior Bands.

Bands have a legal responsibility to address behaviour that offends community standards or is against the law (for example, racial vilification, sexual harassment, common assault). If you witness behaviour that you think may be illegal, you should report it to the police. Similarly, if a bad situation escalates and becomes dangerous, calling the police may be required to intervene.

You should be familiar with your Band's policy as it relates to abusive or aggressive parents. Know what you can and can't do. Are you permitted to issue a warning, withdraw the parent's child from the Band, call a 'time out' or ask the parent to leave?

If your Band doesn't have a code of behaviour, go to our Member Protection area and download Member Protection Policy document. Add your Band's logo or use it as a starting point to develop your own policy.

7 ways how yelling at officials is hurting children

In March the community website from the USA, [Switching the Field](#), published information appropriate to the Banding setting. Here is an adaptation of the article – the [7 ways why yelling at officials is hurting children](#).

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1) They learn that mistakes are not okay

Mistakes are okay and they are nothing to be afraid of. Unfortunately, there have been many examples of young people giving up because of the fear and consequences of making mistakes.

2) They learn to make excuses

Blaming the adjudicator or conductor for a result is an excuse. A lot of things happen on the stage. There are thousands of things going on all at once and all contributing to make a band's performance either good or great. To blame an adjudicator or conductor helps young people abdicate responsibility for their own performance and stops them from listening to a constructive adjudication and from identifying and recognising areas of their own performance that can be improved.

3) They learn to give up when facing adversity

This is what happens when young people abdicate responsibility and blame the adjudicator or conductor. They have less resilience and can easily give up, feeling that control for their performance is out of their hands. It's far more positive to teach young people to control what they can control and accept what they can't.

4) They learn to disrespect authority

If a parent yells at an official, we are teaching children that it's okay to be disrespectful. Like it or not, our actions and words in a band room or at a contest impact on children in many ways that are not confined to banding – they are life lessons!

5) They have negative role models

A parent is a role model. A tutor is a role model. Conductors are role models. If you yell at officials, complain at decisions, disregard volunteers' instructions or abuse, swear and become aggressive towards volunteers, what kind of role model for children are you?

6) They learn to be rude

Officials are doing their job, they are concentrating and doing their best to make your events the best experience for everyone. Interrupting this process by disregarding instructions or abusing them is just plain rude.

7) They learn to be selfish

Abusing or ignoring officials and volunteers anywhere is a personal reaction. It's very likely that those around you are simply enjoying the event. Your behaviours can ruin the event for others, players and audience members alike. The selfishness of this behaviour can drive people away from Banding. Would you want to teach selfishness to your children?