

VOLUNTEERS in SCHOOLS POLICY

PURPOSE

To outline the processes that Bellbridge Primary School will follow to recruit, screen, supervise and manage volunteers to provide a child safe environment, and to explain the legal rights of volunteers.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the recruitment, screening, supervision and management of all people who volunteer at our school.

DEFINITIONS

Child-related work: work that usually involves direct contact (including in person, over the phone, written and online communication) with a child that is a central part of that person's duties. It does not include work that involves occasional contact with children that is incidental to the work.

Closely related family member: parent, carer, parent/carer's spouse or domestic partner, stepparent, parent/carer's mother or father in-law, grandparent, uncle or aunt, brother or sister, including step or half siblings.

Volunteer worker: A volunteer school worker is a person who voluntarily engages in school work or approved community work without payment or reward.

School work: School work means:

- Carrying out the functions of a School Council
- Any activity carried out for the welfare of a school, by the school council, any parents' club or association or any other body organised to promote the welfare of the school
- Any activity carried out for the welfare of the school at the request of the principal or school council
- Providing assistance in the work of any school or kindergarten
- Attending meetings in relation to government schools convened by any organisation which receives government financial support

This is a broad definition and means that volunteers who participate in school community activities, such as fundraising and assisting with excursions, are legally protected (i.e. indemnified) from action by others in the event of an injury or accident whilst they are performing volunteer school work in good faith.

Please note that these definitions are legal statements and cannot be amended.

POLICY

The school is committed to implementing and following practices which protect the safety and wellbeing of children and our staff and volunteers. The school fully recognises the valuable contribution that volunteers make to our school community and the work that we do.

The procedures set out below are designed to ensure that the school's volunteers are suitable to work with children and are well-placed to make a positive contribution to the school community.

Becoming a Volunteer

Members of our school community who would like to volunteer are encouraged to approach a class room teacher, fill out a volunteer request form or respond to a call for volunteers e.g. working bees as applicable.

Attendance

Volunteers (other than those engaging in weekend work) will be required to register at the administration office daily, and wear a visitors badge whilst in the school.

Volunteers will be invited to use the staff room and facilities.

Suitability Checks Including Working with Children Checks

Note: The *Working with Children Act 2005* (Vic) only sets out the minimum requirements for WWC Checks. The Child Safe Standards are another law relevant to schools that requires appropriate screening measures/suitability checks to be undertaken in relation to volunteers and visitors. To ensure compliance with both pieces of legislation and Department policy, the school may choose to go above the minimum requirements under the WWC Act, depending on the nature and risk of the activities the volunteer will be engaged in and the opinion of School Council.

Working with Students

The school values the many volunteers who assist in our classrooms, with sports events, camps/excursions and other events and programs]. To ensure that we are meeting our legal obligations under the *Working with Children Act 2005* (Vic) and the Child Safe Standards, we are required to undertake suitability checks which may include a Working with Children Check, proof of identity, work history involving children and/or reference checks.

Considering our legal obligations, and our commitment to ensuring that our school is a child safe environment, we will require volunteers to obtain a WWC Check and produce their valid card to the general office for verification in the following circumstances:

Volunteers who are not Parent/Family members of any student at the school are required to have a WWC Check if they are engaged in child-related work regardless of whether they are being supervised.

Parent/Family Volunteers who are assisting with any classroom or school activity involving direct contact with children in circumstances where the volunteer's child is **not** participating, or does not ordinarily participate in, the activity.

- **Parent/Family Volunteers** who assist with excursions (including swimming), camps and similar events, regardless of whether their own child is participating or not.
- **Parent/Family Volunteers** who regularly assist in school activities, regardless of whether their own child is participating or not.
- **Parent/Community School Council Members** sitting on School Council with student School Council members, regardless of whether their own child is a student member or not

- In future, the School Council may consider adding other categories where members would like to impose a requirement for a WWCC or other suitability check, relevant to the school context.

In addition, depending on the nature of the volunteer work, the school may ask the volunteer to provide other suitability checks at its discretion (for example, references, work history involving children and/or qualifications). Proof of identity may also be required in some circumstances.

Non Child-Related Work

Please note: At law, volunteers who are not engaged in child-related work (e.g. fete planning and organisation) do not need a WWC Check under the WWC Act. However, the Child Safe Standards require appropriate suitability checks (at the discretion of the school) for any **child-connected** work which is work performed where children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

On some occasions, parents/carers and other members of the school community may volunteer to do work that is not child-related. For example, School Council, participating in sub-committees of the School Council, fete coordination, other fundraising groups that meet in the evenings] during which children will not be, or would not reasonably be expected to be, present.

Volunteers for this type of work are not required to have Working with Children or other suitability checks as they are not engaged in child-related work and children are not generally present during these activities. However, the school reserves the right to undertake suitability checks, including proof of identity, Working with Children Checks, at its discretion if considered necessary for any particular activities or circumstances.

Please note: the school will keep a record of the evidence you produce and will advise you in advance when the WWC Check is about to expire.

Management and Supervision

Volunteer workers will be expected to comply with any reasonable direction of the Principal (or her/his nominee). This will include the requirement to follow our school's policies, including, but not limited to our Child Safety Policy/Statement of Commitment to Child Safety, our Child Safety Code of Conduct and our Statement of Values and School Philosophy. Volunteer workers will also be expected to act consistently with Department of Education and Training policies, to the extent that they apply to volunteer workers, including the Department's policies relating to Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Workplace Bullying.

The Principal has the discretion to make a decision about the ongoing suitability of a volunteer worker and may determine at any time whether or not a person is suitable to volunteer at the school.

The school will provide any appropriate induction and/or training for all volunteer workers. The Principal (or nominee) will determine what induction and/or training is necessary depending on what type of work the volunteer will be engaged in.

All volunteers will be provided induction in relation to the school's child safety practices, including reporting obligations and procedures. Our school has a Mandatory Reporting (Child Protection) Policy which all staff and volunteers should be aware of.

The Principal (or nominee) will determine what supervision, if any, of volunteers is required for the type of work being performed.

It is the responsibility of the School Council appointed Coordinator to ensure that volunteers working at working bees comply with OH&S requirements. For further information, please refer to the website below with links to Volunteer Workers and Working Bees.

The Principal and School Council Coordinator is fully cognisant of the activities that volunteers may not engage in e.g.

- confined space entry
- demolition works
- hazardous manual handling
- hot works (e.g. welding)
- powered mobile plant (e.g. forklift)
- removal or disturbance of asbestos
- temporary supports for structural alterations
- tilt-up or precast concrete
- trenches or shafts deeper than one and half metres
- use of explosives
- use of Hazardous Substances and Dangerous Goods
- working at height (two metres or more)
- works in tunnels

and other high risk tasks.

Nor may a volunteer use any high powered tools including saws, buzzers, shapers, planers and routers

Compensation

Personal Injury

Volunteer workers are covered by the Department of Education and Training's Workers Compensation Policy if they suffer personal injury in the course of engaging in school work.

Property Damage

If a volunteer worker suffers damage to their property in the course of carrying out school work, the Minister (or delegate) may authorise such compensation as they consider reasonable in the circumstances. Claims of this nature should be directed to the principal who will direct them to the Department's Legal Division.

Public Liability Insurance

The Department of Education and Training's public liability insurance policy applies to a volunteer worker engaged in school work is legally liable for:

- a claim for bodily injury to a third party
- damage to or the destruction of a third party's property.

Volunteer workers are covered by DET'S Workers Compensation policy if they suffer personal injury in the course of engaging in school work or when travelling to or from the place where the school work is to occur. Any volunteer injury will be reported on eduSafe.

If a volunteer school worker suffers damage to his or her property in the course of carrying out school work, the Minister may authorise such compensation as the Minister thinks reasonable in the circumstances. Claims of this nature are to be directed to:

Legal Division
People & Executive Services Group
Department of Education and Training
Level 3, 2 Treasury Place
East Melbourne 3002

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Reference:

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/community/Pages/volunteers.aspx

Please refer also to the school's *Working with Children (Suitability) Check – Volunteers & Visitors Policy*, the *Visitors to the School Policy*, *Child Safety Responding & Reporting (Mandatory Reporting)* and the Child Safe Standards.

REVIEW PERIOD

This policy, first developed in this format in May 2019, will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle or if guidelines change (latest DET update late July 2018).

This update was ratified by School Council in 2019

Principal: Debbie Clancy

School Council President: Sian Smith