

Volunteers Policy



PURPOSE

Newmark Primary (the school) recognises the valuable contribution that volunteers provide to the community. The school seeks to develop meaningful strategies to engage with parents/carers and the broader school community in order to maximise student wellbeing and learning.

This policy sets out the school's approach to engaging, onboarding and supporting volunteers, as well as the requirements of volunteers in accordance with commonwealth and state law and regulation.

PRINCIPLES

- The school takes a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and is fully committed to ensuring that its policies, procedures and practices meet the Child Safe Standards as specified in Ministerial Order No. 1359 - Implementing the Child Safe Standards - Managing the risk of child abuse in schools.
- The school, those that work (paid and unpaid) in it and its wider community together have a duty of care to protect children from harm.

AIM

- To establish clear processes to engage, screen, supervise and manage volunteers
- To comply with the specific requirements as set out in Ministerial Order 1359

LEGAL AND REGULATORY BASIS FOR COMPLIANCE

- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)
- Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic);
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic);
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017 (Vic)
- Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic); and
- Ministerial Order No. 1359

SCOPE

This policy applies to all volunteers at the school.

KEY DEFINITIONS

Child-Connected Work: Work authorised by or on behalf of the school board and performed by an adult in the school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child-Related Work: Work that usually involves (or is likely to involve) direct contact with a child (including oral, written or electronic communication as well as face-to-face and physical contact) that is a central part of that person's duties. Child-related work may be either paid or unpaid (voluntary). It does not include work that involves only occasional direct contact with children that is incidental to that person's work.

Closely Related Family Member: Includes parent, carer, step-parent, spouse, domestic partner, grandparent, mother-in-law, father-in-law, uncle, aunt, brother, sister, half-sibling, step-sibling, brother-in-law or sister-in-law.

Personal Information: Information or an opinion about an individual (or an individual who is reasonably identifiable) whether the information or opinion is true or not, and whether the information or opinion is recorded in a material form or not. Personal information can include, but is not limited to: name, signature, email address, phone number, date of birth; medical records; bank account details; employment details; photographs; and information about a person's racial or ethnic origin, religious or philosophical belief, sexual orientation or practices, or criminal record.

Reportable Conduct Scheme: A child safety mechanism introduced as a result of the *Betrayal of Trust Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Non-Government Organisations*. The Reportable Conduct Scheme complements the Child Safe Standards and other existing child safety measures.

Volunteer: A person who performs work without remuneration or reward from the school.

WWCC: Working with Children Check

Vulnerable Students: There are many ways that schools can determine if a student is vulnerable. Vulnerable students may include, but are not limited to, students who are identified as vulnerable by a government agency, family violence service, homeless or youth justice service or mental health service; or students who self-identify as a member of a vulnerable cohort (for example, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children, children with disability, children whose parents have a disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children who are unable to live at home or are in out-of-home care, international students, children from refugee or asylum seeker backgrounds and children who are lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTQI+).

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The **school board** is responsible for:

- reviewing and endorsing the Volunteers Policy;
- monitoring compliance with this policy and related procedures;
- understanding the obligations under this policy, related procedures and legislation; and
- abiding by this policy in their role as board members (volunteer role).

The **principal** is responsible for:

- communicating this policy to students, staff, parents/carers and the school community;
- ensuring that volunteers have obtained any relevant screening checks;
- implementing processes and procedures for the induction, training and supervision of volunteers, as appropriate;
- providing and maintaining a school environment that is safe and free of risks to health and safety, so far as is reasonably practicable;
- permitting or denying entry of any person to school premises, as appropriate; and
- taking action if a volunteer fails to comply with this policy.

The **leadership team** are responsible for:

- supporting volunteers to focus on the safety needs of vulnerable students;
- providing induction, training, information and support to volunteers on child safety matters, as needed;
- acting as a point of contact for volunteers about child safety concerns; and
- reporting any breaches of this policy to the principal (or delegate).

The **staff** are responsible for:

- understanding their obligations under this policy, related procedures and legislation; and
- reporting any breaches of this policy to the principal.

The **volunteers** are responsible for:

- understanding their obligations under this policy, related procedures and legislation;
- taking reasonable care for their own and others' health and safety; and
- ensuring that their actions do not put the safety of any child or young person at risk.

Fulfilling the roles and responsibilities overlined above does not displace or discharge any other obligations that arise if a person reasonably believes that a child is at risk of child abuse.

ENGAGEMENT OF VOLUNTEERS

The school recognises the important role volunteers play in supporting the governance and operations of the school, and student learning and wellbeing programs. The school creates opportunities for volunteers to assist in a variety of ways, including but not limited to:

- school board and sub-committees;
- student learning (e.g. family members who help with reading, projects, skill development, outings, sports, camps etc; experts and audiences that help with projects etc);
- school events and fundraising;
- school engagement strategies (e.g. cohort coordinators; marketing and outreach strategies etc); and
- focus groups.

The recruitment process for engaging volunteers will vary depending on the nature of the role and responsibilities. The school recognises the importance of ensuring the recruitment process is equitable and accessible to all people, and encourages volunteers from diverse backgrounds, including but not limited to people with a disability, Aboriginal people and people from linguistically and culturally different backgrounds.

To support the school in maintaining a child safe environment, before engaging in any child-related work, volunteers must:

- provide a current WWCC;
- participate in relevant induction training;
- read and agree to relevant policies, procedures and codes of conduct; and
- agree to complete additional refresher training as required by the school.

SCREENING OF VOLUNTEERS

When engaging volunteers to perform child-related work, when reasonable and appropriate, we collect and record:

- proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications;
- the person's history of working with children; and
- references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

Working With Children Checks (WWCC)

To ensure the legal obligations under the *Worker Screening Act 2020* (Vic) and Ministerial Order No. 1359, the school will require evidence of a valid WWCC prior to a volunteer commencing at the school. This will include, but is not limited to:

- volunteers who engage in child-related work;
- volunteers who are not engaged in child-related work but are likely to be at the school when children are present;
- closely related family members who are assisting with a school activity, excursion, camp or similar event (regardless of whether their own child is participating or not); and
- members of the school board and sub-committees (regardless of whether their own child is a student at the school or not).

In some circumstances, the school may require evidence of other screening checks (for example, proof of identity, drivers licence, qualifications, references or police check). This will depend on the nature of the work performed by the volunteer.

The school recognises that there are rare occasions where a WWCC is not required, including when:

- a teacher holds a current VIT registration;
- a person is 18 years old or younger;
- a close family member is assisting their child with no other children present;
- a police officer; and
- a person living outside Victoria (however an equivalent Check from their own state or territory must be obtained).

It is the responsibility of the volunteer to apply for, and obtain a valid WWCC. The school will securely store a digital copy of all WWCC cards, and will note the card number, expiry date and type. In the case where a card expires, it is the responsibility of the volunteer to provide the school with a valid WWCC card.

Where a volunteer is required to have to have a WWC Check, the principal has the discretion to accept evidence of a WWC Check application in order for the contractor or visitor to attend the school premises, provided the person provides the school with evidence of the application outcome as soon as practicable after the applicant receives it.

Police Checks

Police checks are generally not mandatory for volunteers, but may be required for volunteers in a particular role. If a police check is required, the school will ensure volunteers are aware of this prior to engaging in the induction and training. The school will not discriminate on the basis of a criminal record, and will provide an opportunity for the volunteer to confidentially explain the result of the check. However the school will refuse an application on the basis of a criminal record when the prior offence prevents the volunteer from performing the inherent requirements of the position, and/or is likely to compromise the safety of children.

TRAINING OF VOLUNTEERS

In alignment with the Child Safe Standards, the school will ensure volunteers engaged in child-related work are provided with relevant information, induction, training, support, supervision and resources appropriate to their role and responsibilities.

Induction Training

Prior to engaging in child-related work, volunteers must participate in the induction training which will include:

- child safe standards overview;
- key policies, procedures and codes;
- information sharing; and
- recordkeeping.

In some cases, volunteers may be required to participate in additional training to ensure they have adequate knowledge and skills. This may include, but is not limited to:

- understanding how to support children when reading;
- understanding the safety procedures of sport activities; and/or
- being aware of the details of an outing or camp.

The school will keep current records of the status of volunteers. The school will also require volunteers to sign the Volunteers Code of Conduct.

MANAGING OF VOLUNTEERS

Supervision

To promote and maintain child safety and wellbeing, the school will conduct different methods of supervision depending on the role and responsibilities. Supervision methods will include, but are not limited to:

- asking for feedback from supervising teachers;
- asking for feedback from students and families;
- observing the volunteer; and/or
- communication between the volunteer and designated supervisor.

Performance Management

Where there is an issue relating to the performance of a volunteer or a breach of the Volunteer Code, the school will notify the volunteer of the issue and arrange a meeting. During the meeting:

- the school will clearly outline the relevant performance issue, including why the current performance level is not acceptable, how the performance needs to improve, and the outcome should performance not improve within a specified timeframe;
- the volunteer will be given the opportunity to respond to the issue;
- if appropriate, the school and volunteer should discuss any reasonable supports to be provided to help the volunteer improve (for example, additional training); and
- the school will keep a record of what is discussed during the meeting.

Termination

The termination of a volunteer may occur in situations where:

- the volunteer does not comply with relevant policies, procedures and codes;
- the volunteers performance is unsatisfactory; or
- the volunteer is no longer needed.

Either party (the school and volunteer) can end the engagement without providing notice.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF VOLUNTEERS

Signing In

Volunteers must sign in at the Front Office upon arrival at the school, and must sign out prior to leaving the school.

Information Sharing

Volunteers must respect and protect the privacy of students, staff and families. Volunteers are likely to be exposed to personal information and sensitive situations. Any personal information volunteers become aware of because of their volunteer work must be managed sensitively.

Volunteers can share student information with relevant school staff to:

- support the student's education, wellbeing and health; and/or
- reduce the risk of harm to the student, other students, staff or visitors.

It is the expectation of the school that volunteers will not discuss or share information about students, staff or families beyond the reasons outlined above.

Reporting Obligations

Volunteers must immediately report any child safety or wellbeing concerns to a member of staff. This may include reporting to a member of staff:

- any concern or suspicion about the physical, psychological or emotional health, safety or wellbeing of a student;
- any concern or suspicion about the inappropriate action or behaviour of any adult; and
- any concern or suspicion about any adult in the school environment (including employees, contractors, volunteers and visitors) regarding an allegation made under the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Recordkeeping

The school is responsible for retaining and disposing of records in accordance with the Public Record Office Victoria guidelines, as it set out in the school's Record Management Policy.

While it is unlikely that volunteers will be responsible for any school records during volunteer work, any school records that volunteers are responsible for must be retained by the school. Volunteers must give all records to the supervising teacher before leaving the school premises.

RELATED POLICIES

- Child Safety Policy
- Reporting Obligations Policy
- Wellbeing Policy
- Concerns and Complaints Policy
- Contractors and Visitors Policy

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- Volunteers Code of Conduct
- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Volunteers Register

- WWCC Register

REVIEW

The school board and principal will review the Volunteers Policy every second year.

ENDORSEMENT

Drafted on	January 2024
Endorsed by	School Board
Endorsed on	February 2024