

VOLUNTEERS

POLICY

BACKGROUND

Voluntary workers can make a significant contribution to the school community by giving their time and sharing their skills and expertise with others. Volunteers may have a wide range of interests and abilities that complement school programs, thus providing a wider range of interactions and experiences for the benefit of students. Volunteers deserve encouragement, effective management, support, and recognition.

From 1 August 2016, the Child Safe Standards come into force, legislated under Ministerial Order No. 870. <http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe/Pages/default.html>

Cavendish Primary School has a zero tolerance of child abuse and as such, all care will be taken when having volunteers into our school.

AIMS

- To ensure that every volunteer who contributes to our school is appropriately screened via a thorough process with the intent of mitigating the risk of child abuse occurring.
- To maximise the number and variety of effective volunteers who contribute to our school.
- To encourage volunteers from both the school community and the wider community to engage and assist within our college educational programs.
- To provide volunteers with the support and recognition of their services and assistance
- To ensure that volunteers involved in activities with potentially high levels of student contact are of sound character and have been deemed suitable to volunteer in school, especially in terms of providing a specialised service or skills where assisting.
- To ensure that the privacy of staff, students and volunteers is respected.

The Principal, as the Executive Officer of School Council, has the authority to require volunteers to undergo a WWC Check and/or a CRC irrespective of whether the person is exempt from the Act.

- Criminal Records Checks (CRC) are conducted by the DET for suitability for employment purposes. A CRC differs from a Working With Children Check (WWCC). See References for more information.
- Working With Children Check (WWCC) are mandatory for all non-teaching based school employees and volunteers. The WWCC is valid for up to five years, however it is monitored on a regular basis. WWCC will be required for one off or intermittent volunteering and where a volunteer is working in the classroom (under the supervision of the teacher) of their own child/children. Volunteers involved in a reading program for example, would be required to have a WWCC.
- Volunteer WWCC will be kept on file within the school. The results of all CRCs and WWCCs are strictly confidential
- An electronic database of all WWCC and CRCs relevant to Cavendish Primary School will be reviewed and updated annually.
- Parents attending activities with any level student contact such as camps are required to have a WWCC irrespective of whether their own child is a participant.
- Volunteers who are in charge of an individual or group of students at any time are required to hold and present to the school a current WWCC PRIOR to any contact with students.

Cavendish Primary School acknowledges that a Working with Children Check (WWCC), a Criminal Records Check (CRC) and other relevant court records check, are valid for up to five years. These checks are an important part of the screening process but do not assess someone's suitability to work with children in a particular role. Cavendish Primary School further acknowledges that an over-reliance on WWCC or failure to properly check references may result in a failure to protect children and schools. As such, all care will be taken and due diligence will be applied to all areas of the recruitment of volunteers.

IMPLEMENTATION

Child Safety Standard 4 – Staff Selection Checklist

When recruiting new staff or volunteers some important child safety areas for assessment include the applicant's:

- motivation to work with children?
- relevant and verifiable child-related work experience
- understanding of professional boundaries
- communication skills
- Volunteers are actively encouraged to be involved in school activities, and will be invited to do so. Volunteers can assist with classes as per invitations of the classroom teacher.
- Volunteers will be sought formally through the school and community newsletters, written invitations and personal approaches, as well as informally through conversation and opportunity.
- The supervising teacher will direct the work and be ultimately responsible for any student discipline issue, not the volunteer.
- Volunteers will be required to register at the administration office on any day of attendance, and wear a visitor's badge whilst in the school, signing in and out as required.
- Volunteers will not be required to carry out tasks with which they are uncomfortable.
- Volunteers must not supervise students on their own.
- Volunteers are required to carry out tasks in a manner consistent with school expectations, including maintenance of a professional, cooperative and confidential working environment.
- Volunteers may be sought to assist with school camps and excursions.
- Staff and Volunteers are expected to treat each other with respect at all times.
- Volunteers should not approach classroom teachers on perceived controversial issues. Any issues should be raised with the Principal.
- Concerns by staff or parents about the work of a volunteer (including their suitability) are to be raised to the Principal immediately.
- Individuals or groups of volunteers will be highlighted in the newsletter, publicising and acknowledging their valued contributions to our school.
- The Principal, school council or teacher (in consultation with the principal) may terminate or deny any invitation of assistance of a volunteer at any time
- Volunteer Workers undertaking schoolwork on behalf of, and with the approval of, the school council or principal are indemnified as to their personal liability in similar terms to teachers.
- A volunteer school worker who suffers injury arising out of or in the course of engaging in any school work is entitled to be paid compensation in accordance with the provisions of the Workers Compensation Act 1995.
- If the property of or the property under the control of a volunteer worker is damaged or destroyed in the course of or arising out of the school work, the Minister for Education or school council may authorise reasonable compensation, as with a person employed by DET.

DEFINITIONS:

Definition of volunteer

A volunteer school worker is a person who voluntarily engages in school work or approved community work, without payment or reward. 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 any 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 or are engaged in any child-connected work, are well protected from legal action by others.

Important: "Voluntary" work carried out to meet Centrelink requirements. People who perform unpaid work in schools under the "Work for the Dole" program and "Community Work" program administered by Centrelink have insurance cover provided by the Federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, and may perform work in schools.

Other Centrelink benefit recipients involved in "voluntary" work in order to fulfil their recipient obligations are not covered by an Australian Government insurance scheme and are not insured to work in Victorian government schools. Schools may not accept this group of Centrelink benefit recipients to work as volunteers in Victorian government schools.

Definition of Child Abuse - includes

- any act committed against a child involving—
- a sexual offence or
- an offence under section 49B(2) of the *Crimes Act 1958* (grooming)
- the infliction, on a child, of—
- physical violence or
- serious emotional or psychological harm
- serious neglect of a child.

Definition of Child Safety

Encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

Definition of Child-connected work

Work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

REFERENCES:

- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/governance/Pages/volunteers.aspx>
- <http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafes/Pages/default.html>

This policy was last ratified by School Council in...

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