

## **Volunteers Policy**

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### **Purpose**

To outline the processes that Oakwood 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.

### **Policy Statement**

We seek to provide an open and friendly learning environment, which values and actively encourages Volunteers to the school. At the same time, we recognise our duty of care to ensure a safe environment for our students and staff.

All volunteers including parents/carers or those acting in their capacity as parents/carers who are required to enter the school throughout the day must present to the main office and will be directed by a staff member to sign in to the visitors register.

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

### **Definitions**

*Child-connected work:* work authorised by the school governing authority/provider of a school boarding services and performed by an adult in a school or school boarding premises environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

*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

### **Permission to be on the premises**

On the basis that schools are not public places, but are public educational institutions, the Principal has ultimate discretion to approve or not approve a potential visitor. The Principal also has the authority to exclude people from being on school grounds outside of school operating hours.

When deciding to approve a volunteer, the Principal will consider the volunteer's suitability, purpose and the benefit provided to the students and staff from the visit

Volunteers will be sought formally through the school newsletter, written invitations and personal approaches, as well as informally through conversation and opportunity. Information sessions will be held covering the process of becoming a volunteer, WWCC requirements, volunteer roles and formal volunteer agreements. These sessions will be held at least once per year. Members of our School community who would like to volunteer are encouraged to contact the School and speak with the Business Manager.

### **Working with students**

Oakwood School values the volunteers that assist in our classrooms. To ensure that we are meeting our legal obligations under the *Working With Children Act 2005* (Vic) and the Child Safe Standards, Oakwood School is 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 Oakwood School is a child safe environment, we will require volunteers to obtain a WWC Check and produce their valid card to the Business Manager 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 activities 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 addition, depending on the nature of the volunteer work, our 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**

On some occasions, parents and other members of the school community may volunteer to do work that is not child-related. For example, volunteering on the weekend for gardening, other 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, Oakwood 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.

School council members and volunteers on any sub-committee of the school council will be asked to provide a valid WWC Check. Whilst we acknowledge that these volunteers will not be engaging in child-related work as part of their role, even when there is a student sitting on the school council, we believe that it is important that our volunteers who are involved in making important decisions about our school which will have an impact on students do have a valid WWC Check.

### **Management and Supervision**

Volunteer workers will be expected to comply with any reasonable direction of the principal (or their 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 Oakwood School.

Oakwood School will provide any appropriate induction and/or training for all volunteer workers. The principal (or their 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 Oakwood School child safety practices, including reporting obligations and procedures.

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

### **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 when 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.

### **Pandemic**

During a pandemic, such as the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, government schools are required to comply with the Department's Operations Guides applicable to that specific pandemic.

The Department updates the Operations Guides as required during a pandemic based on advice from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). These Operations Guides cover procedures for management of visitors and volunteers on school sites.

The current COVID-19 Operations Guide includes a COVIDSafe Plan for Schools that ensures schools remain safe environments. The current Operations Guide is [available on the Department's intranet](#).

### **Related Policies and Resources**

- Statement of Values,
- Visitors Policy,
- Statement of Commitment to Child Safety/Child Safe Policy,
- Child Safety Code of Conduct

Department policies:

- [Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination](#)
- [Child Safe Standards](#)
- [Privacy and Information Sharing](#)
- [Records Management – School Records](#)
- [Sexual Harassment](#)
- [Volunteers in Schools](#)
- [Volunteer OHS Management](#)
- [Working with Children and Other Suitability Checks for School Volunteers and Visitors](#)
- [Workplace Bullying](#)

### Policy review and approval

Policy last reviewed	June 2022
Consultation	21 June 2022
Approved by	Principal
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