

Volunteers Policy

PURPOSE

To outline the processes that Echuca 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 (ie indemnified) from action by others in the event of an injury or accident whilst they are performing volunteer school work in good faith.

POLICY

Echuca Primary School recognises that education is a collaborative partnership involving staff, parents, caregivers and members of the community. Through the additional skills and perspective of volunteers and visitors their contribution can significantly add to the human resources available to the school. Volunteers require encouragement, effective management, support and recognition.

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While the School encourages an open and friendly learning environment, which values and actively encourages volunteers and visitors, it also recognises that the School has legal obligations to comply with, including its duty of care to its staff and students to provide a safe and secure environment at all times. At the same time, it is important that volunteers and visitors feel welcome and comfortable in a friendly school environment that values their input.

Echuca Primary School is committed to implementing and following practices which protect the safety and wellbeing of children and our staff and volunteers.

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

Becoming a volunteer

Echuca Primary School considers it particularly important that parents attending activities with high level student contact such as camps, sleep-overs and sporting programs should be required to have a WWC (Working with children) check irrespective of whether their own child is a participant. A policy which makes the same requirement of all volunteers is fair and reasonable. It removes the need for the school to continually interpret legislative requirements and also ensures compliance with those requirements.

The safety of children is the highest priority for this school.

- Volunteers are actively encouraged to partake in school activities, and will be invited to do so.
- Volunteers may approach classroom teachers or the leadership team for special events such as the school fete, special days etc.
- The School will regularly communicate opportunities for Volunteers to participate in activities including by publishing notices in the weekly Newsletter, year level communication notes and in other informal ways.
- Prior to the commencement of any volunteering activities, the School will provide appropriate training/orientation programs for Volunteers to enable them to understand their role and to provide clarity about what is expected and how they can positively contribute to the School's programs. This training should cover a range of issues relating to the activity and may include confidentiality, privacy, safety and legal liability.
- As part of this training, all Volunteers are to receive a copy of this policy (and any other relevant School documents) clarifying their obligations as a Volunteer.
- In addition, staff directly supervising Volunteers performing activities either in the classroom or elsewhere will, prior to the commencement (and as required), provide clear direction and support regarding what is required and expected in performing the activities.
- It is the responsibility of the School to maintain and keep updated a register of all WWCC/Police Records Checks held by Volunteers or Visitors. The School Office staff must sight and retain copies of a WWCC Card and Police Records Check (where required under this policy or by law) and place them on the School's register.

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- The School's Emergency Management procedures will ensure that all Volunteers/Visitors within the School at any time of an emergency or an emergency practice drill will be recognised and included.
- All School staff will be encouraged to be proactive and make enquiries of any unidentified Volunteer or Visitor (i.e. any person at the School who they believe may fall under the definition of Volunteer or Visitor identifying them as such) and refer them to the main Office to comply with the School's policy.
- It is the responsibility of the School Council appointed Coordinator to ensure that volunteers working at working bees comply with OH&S requirements.

Working with students

Echuca Primary School values the many volunteers that assist in our classrooms/with sports events/camps/excursions/school concerts 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, Echuca Primary 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 Echuca Primary School is a child safe environment, we will require all volunteers to obtain a WWC Check and produce their valid card to the main 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 activities involving direct contact with children in circumstances where the volunteer's child is **not** participating, or does not ordinarily participate in, the activity.

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, eg: volunteering on the weekend for gardening, maintenance, working bees, parents and friends club coordination, school council, participating in sub-committees of 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.

At Echuca Primary School, volunteers for this type of work will still be required to provide [a valid WWC Check/proof of ID/references/work history].

School council members and volunteers on any sub-committee of 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

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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 safe standards and our Statement of Vision and Values. 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 Echuca Primary School.

Echuca Primary 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 Echuca Primary School's child safety practices, including reporting obligations and procedures. Our school has a Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy which all staff and volunteers should be aware of.

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.

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RELATED POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Related policies can be found on our Website at www.echucaps.vic.edu.au

Including *Statement of Vision and Values, Visitors Policy and Child Safe Standards Policy*

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last approved by school council on 29/04/2019 and is scheduled for review in April 2023.

