



# VOLUNTEERS POLICY

## PURPOSE

To outline the processes that our 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.

## DEFINITION

**Child connected work:** work authorised by the school council and performed by an adult in a school while children are present.

**Child related work:** as defined by the *Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)*, child related work is 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 direct contact with children that is incidental to the work.

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

**Volunteer worker** means a person who voluntarily engages in school work or approved community work without payment or reward.

**School work means:** carrying out the function of a school council; any activity carried out for the welfare of a school, by the school council, any parent club or association or any other body organised to promote the welfare of the school; at the request of the principal or school council; providing assistance in the work of the school; attending meetings in relation to government schools convened by any organisation which received 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 (indemnified) from action by others in the event of an injury or accident whilst they are performing volunteer school work in good faith.

## RATIONALE

Volunteers add significantly to the human resources available to the school, and consequently they deserve encouragement, effective management, support and recognition.

## POLICY

Plenty Parklands is committed to implementing and following practices which protect the safety and wellbeing of children and our staff and volunteers. We recognise the valuable contribution that volunteers provide to our school community and the work that we do. The procedures set out below, are designed to ensure that our volunteers are suitable to work with children and are well placed to make a positive contribution to our school community.

**Becoming a Volunteer** – members of our school community who would like to volunteer, are encouraged to.

So that we can strengthen our interdependent partnership between the school and the community, we offer training sessions for parents and community members. The dates for these sessions are advertised regularly in our school newsletter. Volunteers' register their interest on line. The session outlines the role and responsibilities of a volunteer in regard to Privacy, Student Safety, Work Cover, Occupational Health and Safety for example.

Once a volunteer has attended the briefing, they are free to volunteer in a range of roles. For example helping in the classroom, on excursions, with the swimming program, special event days, fun day, sports coaching, in the PE program, transportation of students and fund raising activities. We hold separate briefings for camp.

Following the briefing, volunteers will be issued with a name badge/volunteer lanyard and will be required to collect it at the office and wear it when volunteering in the school; also sign in and out via the electronic sign in point at the office (Compass Kiosk).

**COVID-19 information** – our school follows Department of Education and Training policies with respect to the requirements relating to attendance on school sites and any vaccination and mask wearing requirements.

### **Suitability checks, including Work with Children Clearances**

To ensure that we are meeting our legal obligations under the *Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)* and the Child Safe Standards, we are required to undertake suitability checks, which in most cases will involve asking for evidence of a Working with Children (WWC) Clearance.

The WWC check is free to volunteers and applications can be made on line at the following address or lodged at an Australian Post outlet: <http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/home/>

Considering our legal obligations and our commitment to ensuring that PPPS is a safe environment, we require volunteers to obtain a WWC Clearance and produce their valid card to the office staff for verification in the following circumstances:

- Volunteers who are not parent/family members of any student at the school if they are engaged in child related work, regardless of whether they are being supervised. This is a legal requirement.
- 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. This is a legal requirement.
- 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 our discretion.

The school will keep a register of volunteers and their WWC card number.

Volunteers are required to carry out tasks in a manner consistent with school expectations, including living by our values and maintenance of a professional, cooperative and confidential working environment. All students are to be treated in a positive, impartial and fair manner. Any behaviour management issues to be deferred to the teacher.

Volunteers operate within professional standards and confidentiality. They are in a position of trust and should not discuss with other parents, adults or children, any personal information about students, staff or other volunteers.

Volunteer workers on school property are covered by the OH&S Act and hence the school has specific responsibilities concerning their health and wellbeing. Volunteer workers undertaking school work 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.

### **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, gardening, maintenance, working bees, school council etc. during which children will not be, or would not reasonably be expected to be, present. Plenty Parklands reserves the right to insist on a WWC clearance for this type of work.

School Council members are asked to provide evidence of a valid WWC Clearance. Whilst we acknowledge that these volunteers won't necessarily be engaging in child related work as part of their role, we believe that it is important that our volunteers who are involved in making important decisions about our school, do have a valid WWC Clearance.

### **Training and induction**

Under the Child Safe Standards, volunteers must have an appropriate induction and training in child safety. To support us to maintain a child safe environment, volunteers participating in the training session, will need to familiarise themselves with the policies, procedure and code of conduct referred to in our Child Safety information pack and ensure the actions and requirements in these documents are followed when volunteering for our school.

### **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 school's values, Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct.

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 (or their nominee) will determine the level of school staff supervision required for volunteers, depending on the type of work being performed and with a focus on ensuring the safety and wellbeing of students.

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 PPPS.

### **Privacy and Information sharing**

Volunteers must ensure that any student information they become aware of because of their volunteer work, is managed sensitively and in accordance with the School's Privacy Policy and the Department's policy on Privacy and Information Sharing.

Volunteers must immediately report any child safety concerns they become aware of to a member of staff to ensure appropriate action.

There are some circumstances where volunteers may also be obliged to disclose information to authorities outside of the school, such as to Victoria Police.

### **Records Management**

Any school records that volunteers are responsible for, must be managed in accordance with the Department's Records Management Policy.

### **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.

## **COMMUNICATION**

This policy will be publicly available on the school's website and made available in hard copy from the school office upon request.

## **POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL**

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| Policy last reviewed       | July 2022               |
| Consultation               | School Council<br>Staff |
| Approved                   | July 2022               |
| Next scheduled review date | July 2024               |

If you need help to understand the information in the policy, please contact the school office.