



WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECKS - VOLUNTEERS POLICY

Latest DET Update: 01/10/2017

First Developed in This Format: March 2018

Rationale

- Schools must establish and implement policies to assess and verify the suitability of all persons who will work with children including requiring all volunteers to provide evidence of their suitability. This evidence is generally a Working with Children Check (WWC Check); however if a volunteer's occupation exempts them from the requirement to also have a WWC check e.g. police officers, teachers, they must provide evidence to support their claim to an exemption.
- In addition to a WWC Check, a school may also consider it necessary that a criminal record check is conducted through the DET. This may occur when possible offences are relevant to the duties of the volunteer, for example dishonesty offences, which are not part of the WWC Check. The school covers the cost of the criminal record check.
- As the Executive Officer of School Council, a Principal retains the authority to require a potential volunteer to undergo a criminal record check irrespective if the volunteer is exempt from the Act. For instance a parent attending an overnight camp with their child may be exempt from requiring a WWC Check, however a School Council may determine that any person attending an excursion or camp must have either a WWC Check or have undergone a criminal record check conducted by the Department. School Councils should ensure their criminal record check policy reflects this authority.
- Although the Act exempts a parent whose child ordinarily participates in the activity this does not preclude schools from adopting a blanket policy requiring all volunteers to have a WWC check.

Applying for the WWC Check

The WWC Check is conducted by the Department of Justice. Applications must be lodged at one of the participating Australia Post outlets in Victoria. For a list of Australia Post outlets where a WWC Check application may be made see: www.auspost.com.au.

WWC Check applicants need to complete an online 'Application for WWC Check' form at www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren before going to a participating Australia Post outlet with proof of identity documents to lodge the application.

If the employee passes the WWC Check s/he will be issued a WWC Card which also acts as an 'Assessment Notice'. An Assessment Notice means the employee has passed the WWC Check and may work in 'child-related work'.

A WWC Check applicant who is issued with an Interim Negative Notice or a Negative Notice should contact the Working with Children Unit within the Department of Justice, telephone 1300 652 879 to discuss any right of appeal that may exist or visit their website for further information at: www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren

Purpose

- To ensure volunteers approved to work with children at this school meet the legal requirements of the *Working with Children Act 2005*.
- To ensure children under our care are protected from exposure to inappropriate people.
- To ensure all people engaged in 'child related work' with our students have Working with Children Checks.
- To provide an environment that is safe and secure.

- To minimise risk of harm to children by requiring staff and volunteers of Alphington Primary School to provide evidence that they have appropriate approvals to work with children in accordance with legislation and Department policy.
- To ensure the school has strategies to enhance compliance with the Child Safe Standards 2 and 4.
- To ensure the school discharges its duty of care towards children.

Definitions

The Working with Children (WWC) Check is a background check provided by the Victoria Police. For the definition of “volunteer”, please refer to the school’s *Volunteer Workers Policy*.

The WWC Check is a minimum checking standard set by the *Working with Children Act 2005* for those who work with children, either on a paid or voluntary basis. It checks for serious sexual, violent and drug-related offences as well as disciplinary findings of professional agencies such as the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

To be a volunteer at a school a Working with Children Card provided by the Department of Justice is required. This card is:

- valid for 5 years
- transferable between volunteer organisations
- free of charge for volunteers, but cannot be used for paid employment.

Note: WWC Checks for paid employment can be used to show suitability for volunteer work.

Implementation

- The safety and wellbeing of every child at the school is our highest priority.
- The school will inform volunteers of the need to have a Working with Children Check.
- A volunteer can commence work in the school when they provide a receipt as proof they have applied for a WWC Check with the Department of Justice.
- The Working with Children Card provided by the Department of Justice is valid for five years, transferable between organisations and will be free of charge for unpaid work.
- All people required to have Working with Children checks are issued a WWC Check Card which School Council expects will be photocopied by school staff and that person’s name added to the school’s register of ‘approved volunteers.’ Only volunteers on the school register are able to work or volunteer at the school or during school related activities.
- School Council requires that all volunteers directly involved in school camps, excursions, sleep-overs, teaching of swimming lessons, transport of children without staff members present (rare), extra-curricular activities such as school sporting teams etc. all must have WWC Checks.
- School Council will consider other activities such as incursions on a case-by-case basis.
- The school will apply privacy principles when collecting, using, retaining or disposing of personal or health information in accordance with the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)* and the *Health Records Act 2001 (Vic)*.
- Please refer also to the school’s *Volunteer Workers Policy*, *Visitors to the School Policy*, the *Incursions (Safety of Children Working with External Providers) Policy*, the *Working with Children Checks – Staff Policy* and the Child Safe Standards.

Evaluation

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school’s three-year review cycle or if guidelines change (latest DET update early October 2017).

This policy was ratified by School Council in March 2018

Reference:

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/community/Pages/volunteers.aspx