



OAK PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS IN SCHOOL POLICY

Definition

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, 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" programs 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 fulfill their recipient obligations are not covered by an Australian Government insurance scheme. Schools may however accept this group of Centrelink benefit recipients to work as volunteers in Victorian government schools and note that they are insured by the Department.



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Purpose

To ensure volunteers approved to work with children meet legal requirements. Volunteer school workers are not liable in any civil proceedings for anything done, or not done, in good faith in providing a community service.

Rationale

School must establish and implement policies to assess and verify the suitability of volunteers 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 Department. 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.

Guidelines

- The principal of the school or the school council may seek volunteers formally through the school newsletter, written invitations and personal approaches, as well as informally through conversations.
- The principal of the school council may terminate any invitation to a person to assist a school as a volunteer school worker.
- A volunteer school worker will at all times comply with any direction or instruction given to him/her by the principal.
- Volunteers will be provided with appropriate training before commencing their volunteer role to assist them in carrying out their tasks at school in an effective manner.

This training may cover the areas listed below:

- Occupational Health and Safety
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Anti Discrimination/Equal Opportunity
- Sexual Harassment Policy



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- Teacher Duty of Care
- Teachers and Mandatory Reporting
- School Policy & Student Management
- Appropriate behaviour when working with students
- Volunteer Policy and any relevant codes of practice

*The Parent Helpers' Courses organised by the school will also include training on these areas. Similar training may be conducted for the School Council and the PFA early in the school year.

- Volunteers are required to carry out tasks in a manner consistent with school expectations/values, including the maintenance of a professional, cooperative and confidential working environment.
- Volunteers should maintain appropriate standards of conduct at all times – this includes speaking style/language, respect for personal space and care with any physical contact.
- Volunteers will be expected to respect the professional standing and roles of school staff members.
- School staff members and volunteers will be expected to treat each other with respect.
- Volunteers may be sought to assist with school camps and excursions. School Council requires that volunteers assisting with offsite school camps provide a satisfactory police records check prior to their participation.
- Department of Education and Training policy states that 'accredited police records checks are desirable for volunteer workers who come into contact with students at the school'.
- Volunteers are not to approach classroom teachers on controversial issues. Such issues are to be addressed through the Principal or Assistant Principal.
- If staff have any issues related to the volunteers program they should be brought to the attention of their Coordinator, Assistant Principal or Principal.
- Concerns by staff or parents regarding the work of a volunteer should be raised with the Principal or Assistant Principal immediately. Such concerns will be discussed promptly with the volunteer concerned and appropriate action taken.
- Volunteers will be required to register at the administration on their arrival.
- Volunteers will be invited to use staff toilets and staffroom facilities.
- 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.



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- 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 as if the person was a worker employed by the Department and the personal injury suffered arose out of or in the course of employment with the Department.
- Individual or groups of volunteers will be acknowledged in the newsletter, publicising their contributions to the school.
- A morning tea will be provided in Term 4 to thank volunteers for their contributions throughout the year.

Commencing volunteering

A volunteer can commence work in a school when they provide a receipt as proof they have applied for a WWC Check with the Department of Justice.

Working with Children Check

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.

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.



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Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed annually

This policy was ratified by School Council in November 2019

Reference:

Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide

- Duty of Care 4.6.1.2
- Volunteer Workers (Police Records Checks) 6.39
- Volunteer Workers Insurance 6.9.2.5
- Liability Volunteer workers 6.16.2.2
- Volunteer school workers (Type of Activities) 4.14.2
- Compensation for personal injury suffered by a volunteer worker 4.14.4