



## Volunteers or Volunteer Workers in School POLICY STRATHAIRD PRIMARY SCHOOL

### Rationale:

The rationale of this policy is to explain the definition of a volunteer worker, to explain the process by which voluntary work can be approved and to explain legal rights of volunteer workers in schools.

### Definition:

“Child-related work” is defined in the *Working with Children Act 2005* (the Act). You are considered to be performing “child-related work” if you

- work or volunteer in a school,
- volunteer or do this work on a regular basis, *and*
- have direct contact with children under 18 which is not directly supervised, *and*
- do not qualify for an exemption (e.g. exemptions apply to those holding VIT registration, those under 18 years of age, Victoria Police officers).

The Working With Children Check (WWC) is different from a police check; holders of a police check will still need a WWC Check.

Under the Act, a parent who volunteers in relation to an activity in which his or her child ordinarily participates (e.g. the child’s reading class) is exempt from a WWC Check in respect of that work.

If a parent volunteers in a class or activity that his/her child does not ordinarily participate in, then he/she may need to apply for and pass a WWC Check. **However, it is the policy of this school that all volunteers (other than exempt category as mentioned above) should hold a current WWC Check to be given approval to volunteer, as is the right of the school.** The Act aims to help keep children safe from sexual or physical harm when parents entrust the care of their child/children to others outside of normal domestic arrangements.

A volunteer/volunteer worker in a school 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 the school

### Who is Specifically Excluded by DET from working as a school volunteer:

Centrelink benefit recipients involved in “voluntary” work in order to fulfill their recipient obligations are **not** covered by an Australian Government insurance scheme and are **not** insured to work in Victorian government schools. **Schools may not accept this group of Centrelink benefit recipients to work as volunteers in Victorian government schools.**

### Approval Process:

Approval is granted by the Principal as the representative of the Secretary. From 30 December 2007 it can be an offence to engage in child-related work in educational institutions without a current Working with Children Check. The following are four groups from which approval can be granted:

- Parent helpers – the school encourages parents/guardians to be partners in their children’s development and provide a process by which parents can assist classroom teachers through specific activities such as hearing children read, excursions and camps. Provided parents hold a current WWC Check and by prior arrangement with the classroom teacher these volunteers are given a general approval in accordance with the Working With Children Check Volunteer 2017 Policy.
- Student teachers- The Commonwealth Government provides funding to higher education institutions to support the professional teaching practice component of initial teacher education programs. In turn, the institutions contract directly on a fee-for-service basis with individual schools for the provision of pre-service teacher supervision during professional practice. In addition to the supervised teaching practice (practicum) required for a program accredited by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, a number of Victorian higher education institutions have introduced an internship model of professional practice to their initial teacher education programs. The Department welcomes the introduction of internships in initial teacher education programs as one way for schools and higher education institutions to better prepare pre-service teachers for teaching after graduation. All pre-service teachers participating in initial teacher education programs, including interns, are considered to be “student teachers”. Applications are made by the higher education institutions to schools to accept student teachers. Student teachers are given general approval
- Work Experience- Work experience is part of the schools’ educational program where students experience the world of work, often for the first time. It is the short term placement of secondary school students with employers, to provide insights into the industry, and the workplace in which they are located. Students are placed with employers primarily to observe and learn – not to undertake activities which require extensive training or expertise. It is undertaken at the employer’s premises and has enormous benefits for students. Applications are made by the Secondary College to schools and approval is required by the Principal of the employing school, (i.e. Strathaird P.S. Principal).
- All other volunteers- any other volunteers will require approval by the Principal, this includes for example friends or relatives of teachers, student teachers not on an approved placement, previous graduated students, sporting groups.

#### **Rights of Volunteers:**

Volunteers who participate in school community activities, such as fundraising and assisting with excursions, are well protected from legal action by others.

**Personal injury** volunteer workers are covered by the Department’s Workers Compensation policy if they suffer personal injury in the course of engaging in school work.

**Property damage** if a volunteer school worker suffers damage to his or her property in the course of carrying out school work, the Minister may authorise such compensation as the Minister thinks reasonable in the circumstances.

#### **Evaluation:**

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school’s four-year review cycle.

This policy was last ratified by School Council. 21<sup>st</sup> February 2017