

VOLUNTEER POLICY

RATIONALE

Our parent community and other school volunteers have a wide range of experiences, skills and knowledge. We believe that by sharing their talents and commitment, volunteers can make a significant contribution to the learning outcomes of students, our school community and its environment. An essential element of a safe learning environment is that the adults and volunteers pose no threat to the wellbeing of our children. Volunteers must be suitable to work in close proximity to children and young people at all times. To ensure this, all volunteers will be screened, and some volunteers will be asked to agree to criminal history checks.

VOLUNTEER SELECTION PROCEDURES

Before they commence volunteer work, all volunteers will be required to sign both an agreement and confidential declaration form. They will be also be encouraged to attend and complete induction training in Responding to Abuse and Neglect for Volunteers.

The Principal's decision is final in determining who is eligible to work as a volunteer at the school. Any applicant not accepted for volunteer work will be advised in writing.

VOLUNTEERS FROM WITHIN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

1. Volunteers who are parents or guardians of students make contact with the school to ascertain school need for volunteers.
2. If required, and at the school's expense, the Principal will apply for a Criminal History check on behalf of the volunteer.

VOLUNTEERS FROM OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

1. The Principal, or their delegate, will assess volunteers for their suitability to work at the school. This assessment will be made in relation to the skills and contributions being offered and after verification of the person's good character.
2. Volunteers outside of the school community, will be asked to provide:
 - Details of qualifications, experience and other information relevant to the program.
 - The names of two referees who may be called upon to verify information provided and attest to the character of the volunteer.
 - Current criminal history check

VOLUNTEERS WHO REQUIRE CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECKS

Federal and State authorities have identified the following groups of volunteer parents, caregivers and others for criminal history checks:

- Governing Council members when the Governing Council is the employing body for OSHC and Vacation Care.
- Attending any overnight camps/school sleep-overs or billeting programs.
- Acting as a coach or manager of teams or groups of children and young people if their child is not in the team.

All other categories of volunteers will be assessed on a needs basis by the Principal or his/her delegate.

Why criminal history checks?

The Children's Protection Act 1993 has been amended, and now includes changes relating to child safe environments, criminal history checks, as well as mandatory reporting. All schools are required to develop their child safe organisations policy, code of conduct and standards that appropriately reflect the policies and standards as established by the South Australian Department for Families and Communities.

Criminal history checks: Government organisations and schools (including their contractors and subcontractors) are required to undertake criminal history checks on people who work (in close proximity or who have regular contact) with children or their records. Checks must be done as soon as practicable.

Mandatory notification: Changes to the Act also extend the responsibility of mandatory notification of suspected instances of child abuse to volunteers in the organisations that provide services wholly or partly for children.

THE SCHOOL'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO VOLUNTEERS

The school will:

- Maintain accurate and up to date records of a volunteer's training, work and criminal check details.
- Ensure confidentiality of all volunteer details and information.
- Match volunteers with work that is suitable to their skills, interests, time commitments and health status.
- Allocate a staff member to oversee each volunteer in the area/s he/she works.
- Provide volunteers with full induction training that will include:
 - Mandatory reporting.
 - Occupational Health Safety & Welfare procedures.
 - Duty of Care responsibilities to students.
- Provide training specific to the area of volunteer work.
- Ensure that relevant staff will meet their duty of care to students by not leaving a volunteer to work unsupervised with students.
- Consult with a volunteer if any changes to their area of work or time commitment needs to be made.
- Ensure that relevant staff will be available to discuss volunteers' concerns as they arise.

VOLUNTEERS' RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE SCHOOL

The volunteer's most important responsibility relates to his/her duty of care to children. Students are a vulnerable group generally, due to their age and lack of experience. Their vulnerability increases if they are very young, if they have an intellectual or physical disability, if they are newly arrived in Australia with English as a second or additional language or if they experience emotional/physical neglect.

Volunteers must:

- Sign the visitors' book in the administration area on arrival and departure (during school hours).
- Wear the provided name badge if appropriate.
- Dress appropriately and not be adversely affected by alcohol or any other drug.
- Refer all student concerns or behaviour issues to the supervisor.
- Keep confidential any information about students.
- Notify the school as early as possible if they are unable to fulfil their volunteer commitment.

For volunteers, respecting the rights of children means they must not:

- Work unsupervised with students.
- Be involved in toileting students or assisting with change-rooms/sickrooms.
- Have unsupervised contact with students during break times.
- Encourage affection from or dependency in students eg by giving presents.
- Have intentionally inappropriate physical contact with students (the supervisor will provide comfort/first aid to a distressed student).
- Display bullying or intimidating behaviours towards students.
- Smoke when working with children as the school is a smoke free environment.

CANCELLATION OF AGREEMENT

A volunteer's agreement can be cancelled at the Principal's discretion and where the volunteer:

- Has no more suitable work available.
- Fails to follow requirements outlined in the volunteer policy and through induction training.
- Behaves towards students, parents or staff in a manner deemed inappropriate or improper.
- Repeatedly fails to meet commitments without notice to the school.