



School Volunteers Policy and Procedure

Document Number: 00016

St Patrick's School, Nhill operates with the consent of the Bishop of the Diocese of Ballarat and is operated and governed by the Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL).

Policy Statement

St Patrick's School is committed to implementing and following practices that protect the safety and well-being of children and young people, staff, and volunteers. St Patrick's School welcomes volunteers and recognises the valuable contribution that volunteers provide to our school community.

Volunteers have rights when present on, or participating in activities within St Patrick's School, which include the right to attend and work in a safe supportive environment with appropriate infrastructure and effective management practices.

Volunteers also have responsibilities, which include acting responsibly, being accountable to St Patrick's School, for their actions and respecting the school's values, policies, and practices.

The included supporting procedures are designed to ensure that St Patrick's School volunteers are permitted to work with children and are well-placed to make positive contributions to the school community.

Context

St Patrick's School is committed to the safety and well-being of all students and young people, and at the same time provides an environment that promotes active participation from the community.

This policy and procedure assist in supporting all St Patrick's School child-safe policies and procedures by providing processes for the recruitment, screening, and management of volunteers to provide a child-safe environment and explain the legal rights of volunteers.

Volunteer involvement in various activities can contribute to and increase the ability of St Patrick's School to meet its goals and expand learning opportunities for students. Volunteers can provide the time, skills, expertise, and viewpoint that enable this school to pursue programs and activities that benefit students and the community.

For individuals, volunteering provides an opportunity to be involved in activities reflecting their interests and using their skills. Volunteering can be a way to develop skills, potential pathways to employment, or a way to contribute to the community.

This policy is intended to ensure that volunteers engaging with St Patrick's School are:

- Provided with an environment that is safe, significant, fulfilling, and appreciated.
- Aware of their legal rights when volunteering.
- Recruited, screened, trained, supervised, and managed in accordance with the *Victorian Child Safe Standards* and the *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement*.

Scope

This policy and procedure apply to all volunteers at St Patrick’s School, and to the recruitment, screening, supervision, and management of all people who volunteer at our school.

Legislative Context

- [Education and Training Reform Act 2006 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Ministerial Order 1359: Implementing the Child Safe Standards - Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises](#)
- [National Standards for Volunteer Involvement](#)
- [Privacy Act 1988 \(Cth\)](#)
- [VRQA Minimum Standards and Requirements for School Registration](#)
- [Worker Screening Act 2020 \(Vic\)](#)

Definitions specific to this policy

TERM	DEFINITION
Child-related work	Work that usually involves direct contact (including in-person, over the phone, written and online communication) with a child is a central part of that person’s duties. It does not include work that involves occasional contact with children that is incidental to the work.
Child-connected work	Work authorised by the school governing authority/provider of a school boarding service and performed by an adult in a school or school boarding premises environment where children are present or can reasonably be expected to be present.
Closely related family member	Parent, carer, caregiver, parent/carer’s spouse or domestic partner, stepparent, parent/carer’s mother- or father-in-law, grandparent, uncle or aunt, brother or sister, including step or half-siblings.
Volunteer worker	A person who voluntarily engages in schoolwork or approved community work without payment or reward.
School work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Carrying out the functions of a school advisory council (SAC) ▪ 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. ▪ Assisting in the work of any school or kindergarten

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attending meetings in relation to schools convened by any organisation which receives government financial support. <p>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 (i.e., indemnified) from action by others in the event of an injury or accident whilst they are performing volunteer school work in good faith.</p>
WWCC Check	<p>The Working with Children Check is a screening process for assessing or re-assessing people who work with or care for children in Victoria.</p> <p>https://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/</p>
WWCC Clearance	<p>Once a Working with Children Check application is passed, the applicant will receive a Working with Children Check Clearance which allows them to do child-related work for five years, unless it is surrendered or revoked. A WWCC Clearance may also be suspended or revoked if the applicant is charged with or found guilty of an offence, or if a professional conduct finding is made against them.</p>

Procedure

Becoming a Volunteer

Members of the school community who would like to volunteer are encouraged to contact St Patrick’s School and undertake the school’s Volunteer Induction program and checklist to assure understanding of the Child Safe Standards. On completion of the Induction, volunteers will need to complete the Responsibilities of a Volunteer agreement form and undergo appropriate screening measures and suitability checks before being allowed to engage in child related work.

Requirements for Volunteers

Suitability Checks Including Working with Children Checks / Clearances

The *Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)* only sets out the minimum requirements for WWC checks and clearances. The *Victorian Child Safe Standards* is another law relevant to schools that requires appropriate screening measures/suitability checks for volunteers and visitors. To ensure compliance with both pieces of legislation and DOBCEL policy, St Patrick’s School may choose to go above the minimum requirements under the *Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)*, depending on the nature and risk of the activities the volunteer will be engaged in.

Working with Students

St Patrick’s School values the many volunteers that assist in our classrooms, with our sports events, on camps and excursions, at our on-site school events and off-site school fundraising and special programs. To ensure that DOBCEL meets the legal obligations under the *Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)* and the *Child Safe Standards*, St Patrick’s School is required to undertake suitability checks which will involve asking for evidence of a Working with Children (WWC) Clearance and may also involve undertaking reference, proof of identity, qualification and work history involving children checks.

It is *not* an offence under the Worker Screening Act for people to engage in child-related work without a WWC Clearance if they have:

- Applied for the WWC Check and the application has not been finally decided or withdrawn.
- Not previously been given a WWCC exclusion under the Worker Screening Act or a corresponding working with children law.

As a result, St Patrick's School will consider accepting evidence of the *application* for a WWC Check, in place of the WWC Clearance. Where prospective volunteers are required under the law and this policy to have a WWC Clearance, the Principal has the discretion to accept evidence of a WWC Check application in order to commence volunteer work, provided the volunteer provides the school with evidence of the application outcome (clearance or exclusion) as soon as practicable after the applicant receives it. In these circumstances, St Patrick's School will ensure appropriate additional supervision of the volunteer until the clearance has been approved.

Considering the legal obligations, and the commitment to ensuring that St Patrick's School is a child-safe environment, the Principal (or delegate) will require volunteers to obtain a WWC Clearance and produce their valid card to St Patrick's School Office 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.
- **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.
- **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.

St Patrick's School recognises that volunteers who are parents, or closely related family members of a child at the school who volunteer as part of an activity that their child is participating in or usually participate in are not required to have a WWC Clearance under the Worker Screening Act. However, DOBCEL recommends that St Patrick's School does require parents to obtain one in these circumstances given the degree of contact volunteers may have with students in these situations and to assure compliance with Child Safe Standards.

- **Parent/community school advisory council members** sitting on the school's advisory council.

Under the Worker Screening Act, school council members are not required to have a WWC Clearance. However, DOBCEL does advise that school advisory council members obtain a WWC Clearance. This supports compliance with the child safe standards, which require St Patrick's School to implement practices for a child-safe environment, including making appropriate suitability checks for any work performed by an adult where children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

In addition, depending on the nature of the volunteer work, the Principal may ask the volunteer to provide other suitability checks at their discretion (for example, proof of identity, references, work history involving children and/or qualifications).

Non Child-Safe 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, volunteering on the weekend for gardening, maintenance, working bees, parents and friends club coordination, participating in sub-committees of the school council and other fundraising groups that meet in the evenings during which children will not be, or would not reasonably be expected to be, present.

At St Patrick's School, volunteers for this type of work will still be required to provide a valid WWC clearance. The Principal of St Patrick's School also reserves the right to undertake at their discretion suitability checks, including requiring proof of identity and reference checks.

School Advisory Council (SAC) Representatives

School Advisory Council representatives and volunteers on any sub-committee will be asked to provide evidence of a valid WWC Clearance. It is acknowledged that these volunteers will not necessarily engage in child-related work. However, it is important that volunteers who are involved in making decisions that have an impact on students do have a valid WWC Clearance. The Principal also reserves the right to undertake suitability checks at their discretion, including requiring proof of identity and reference checks.

Training and Induction

Under the Child Safe Standards, volunteers must have appropriate induction and training in child safety and wellbeing.

In maintaining a child-safe environment, before engaging in any work where children are present, or reasonably likely to be present, volunteers must familiarise themselves with the policies, procedures, and Safeguarding Children and Young People code of conduct and ensure the actions and requirements in these documents are followed when volunteering.

DOBCEL requires that volunteers receive information and/or may be asked to complete additional child safety training on:

- The school's *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy*.
- The school's *Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct*.
- Complaints process at the school.
- Guidance on responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing.
- Guidance on how to build culturally safe environments for children and young people.
- Awareness of information-sharing and recordkeeping obligations.
- Awareness of a child's or a young person's right to privacy.

DOBCEL requires that volunteers complete the documentation listed below:

- Code of Conduct
- Volunteer Responsibility Agreement

Depending on the nature and responsibilities of their role, St Patrick's School may also require volunteers to complete additional child safety training.

Management and Supervision

Volunteer workers will be expected to comply with any reasonable direction of the Principal (or their delegate). This will include the requirement to follow the school's policies, including, but not limited to, the St Patrick's School *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy*, the completion of the St Patrick's School *Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct* and undertaking the St Patrick's School Volunteer Induction program to ensure understanding of Child Safe Standards requirements.

Volunteer workers will also be expected to act consistently with DOBCEL and school policies, to the extent that they apply to volunteer workers, including DOBCEL's policies relating to equal opportunity and anti-discrimination, sexual harassment, and workplace bullying. Please refer to the DOBCEL *Prevention of Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination Policy and Procedure* for further information.

The Principal (or their delegate) 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 well-being of students.

The Principal has the discretion to determine whether a person is suitable to volunteer at St Patrick's School and at any time may decide regarding the ongoing suitability of a volunteer worker.

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 DOBCEL's *Privacy Policy*.

Under this policy, student information can and should be shared with relevant school staff to:

- support the student's education, well-being and health.
- reduce the risk of reasonably foreseeable harm to the student, other students, staff, or visitors.
- make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the student's disability.
- provide a safe and secure workplace.

Volunteers must immediately report to a member of staff any child safety concerns that they become aware of. There are some circumstances where volunteers may also be obliged to disclose information to authorities external to the school such as Victoria Police. For further information on child safety responding and reporting obligations, refer to DOBCEL [PROTECT] *Identifying and Responding to Abuse – Reporting and Responding Obligations for School Policy*.

Records Management

All volunteers attending the school to conduct work must report to the school office upon arrival for instruction and follow the school's signing-in process.

St Patrick's School will maintain accurate volunteer management records. The following information will be recorded:

- Personal details for the volunteer including full name, address, date of birth and emergency contact information (this information should be kept in an accessible place and separate from other confidential information in relation to the volunteer).
- Selection/screening process documentation.
- Copy of WWCC card.
- National Police Certificate (if relevant).
- Volunteer Responsibility Agreement Form.
- Record for each day on which the volunteer is participating at the site (the date and hours of participation).
- Rolls kept of the students working with the volunteer.
- Names of staff members to whom the volunteer reports.
- Dates and details of any concerns raised by others about the volunteer and action taken attendance and training records.

St Patrick's School will retain all documents relevant to the screening and selection process, including any unsuccessful applications for volunteer work, for at least seven years after the selection process has

concluded. St Patrick's School will comply with Public Record Office Victoria Standards (including in relation to minimum retention periods), privacy legislation and any relevant policies in relation to the storage and use of personal records.

Supporting Documentation

- [CECV Guidelines on the Engagement of Volunteers in Catholic Schools](#)
- [Responsibilities of Volunteer Form](#)
- Recruitment Policy and Procedure
- Safeguarding Children & Young Code of Conduct
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Visitor Policy
- Parent Code of Conduct
- Privacy Policy

DOBCEL Principles of Governance

All DOBCEL policies are founded on and reflect the [DOBCEL Principles of Governance](#).

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Responsible Directorate member	Deputy Director: Stewardship
Policy Owner	Manager: Safeguarding & Standards
Assigned Board Committee	Wellbeing and Safeguarding Consultative Committee
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