



POLICY	VOLUNTEERS
DATE	August 2022
SCHOOL COUNCIL ENDORSEMENT	August 2022
REVIEW DATE	September 2024

PURPOSE

To outline the processes that Blackburn English Language School (ELS) will follow to recruit, screen, supervise and manage volunteers to provide a child safe environment, and to explain the legal rights of volunteers.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the recruitment, screening, supervision and management of all people who volunteer at the school. The school community of parents/guardians/carers is geographically diverse and undergoes constant change, therefore, Blackburn ELS does not recruit volunteers from within this community. The school holds the view that its newly-arrived families, in the critical stage of their settlement, cannot be expected to make a time commitment to the school as volunteers. Due to the specific nature of the teaching and learning program and the skill set required to support student learning, Blackburn ELS, in general, does not encourage volunteers.

This policy complies with the VRQA standards but not all areas of the policy are active at Blackburn ELS.

DEFINITIONS

Child-connected work: work authorised by the school governing authority/provider of a school boarding services and performed by an adult in a school or school boarding premises environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child-related work: As defined by the *Worker Screening Act 2020* (Vic), child-related work is work that usually involves direct contact (including in person, over the phone, written and online communication) with a child that is a central part of that person's duties. It does not include work that involves occasional direct contact with children that is incidental to the work.

Closely related family member: parent, carer, 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 volunteer school worker is a person who voluntarily engages in school work or approved community work without payment or reward.

School work: 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 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 legally protected (ie indemnified) from action by others in the event of an injury or accident whilst they are performing volunteer school work in good faith.

POLICY

Blackburn ELS is committed to implementing and following practices which protect the safety and wellbeing of children, young people, staff and volunteers.

Blackburn ELS recognises the valuable contribution that volunteers can provide to a school but acknowledges the limited use of volunteers in the context of its new-arrivals program.

The procedures set out below ensure that volunteers are suitable to work with newly-arrived children and young people, from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and are well-placed to make a positive contribution to the school community.

Becoming a volunteer

Members of our school community who would like to volunteer can contact the assistant Principal at the respective campus.

COVID-19 vaccination information

Our school follows Department of Education and Training policy with respect to the requirements relating to attendance on school sites and COVID-19 vaccinations.

For further information, refer to:

- [COVID-19 Vaccinations – Visitors and Volunteers on School Sites](#)

Suitability checks including Working with Children Clearances (WWCC)

- The Working With Children Act 2005 (Vic) only sets out the minimum requirements for WWCC's.
- The Child Safe Standards are another law relevant to schools that require appropriate screening measures/suitability checks to be undertaken in relation to volunteers and visitors.

Working with students

Blackburn ELS involves volunteers from the local community to assist with student learning in the classroom under the direct supervision of the teacher. The school does so on a limited basis.

To ensure the school is meeting its legal obligations under the Working With Children Act 2005 (Vic) and the Child Safe Standards, Blackburn ELS undertakes suitability checks.

These include:

- Working with Children Check,
- proof of identity,
- work history involving children and/or reference checks at the discretion of the Principal.

Considering our legal obligations, and our commitment to ensuring that Blackburn ELS is a child safe environment, volunteers are required to obtain a WWCC and produce their valid card to the Business Manager for verification in the following circumstances:

- **Volunteers who are not parent/family members** of any student at the school are required to have a WWCC if they are engaged in child-related work regardless of whether they are being supervised. This is a legal requirement under the Working with Children Check Act and must not be changed.

- **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.
This is a legal requirement under the Working with Children Check Act.
- **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 or not.
- **Community school council members** sitting on school council with student school council members, regardless of whether their own child is a student member or not. Blackburn ELS does not have parent or student members on its school council. However, given that school council meetings operate immediately after the end of the school day, and that it is a reasonable expectation students may be onsite, Blackburn ELS requires all members of the school council to have and produce a valid WWCC.

Non child-related work

At law, volunteers who are not engaged in child-related work do not need a WWCC under the WWC Act. However, the Child Safe Standards require appropriate suitability checks for any child-connected work which is performed where children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

At Blackburn ELS, volunteers for this type of work will be required to provide a valid WWCC and proof of ID. At the discretion of the Principal, they may be required to provide references/work history.

School council members and volunteers on any sub-committee of school council will be required to provide a valid WWCC. Although these volunteers will not be engaging in child-related work as part of their role (even when there is a student sitting on the school council), it is important that volunteers, who are involved in making important decisions that will impact on students, have a valid WWCC.

Training and induction

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

To support us to maintain 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 code of conduct referred to in our Child Safety Induction Pack and ensure the actions and requirements in these documents are followed when volunteering for our school.

Depending on the nature and responsibilities of their role, Blackburn ELS 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 nominee).

This will include the requirement to follow the school's policies, including but not limited to the Child Safe Standards Policy, Statement of Commitment to Child Safety, Child Safe Code of Conduct and the Statement of Values and School Philosophy. Volunteers at Blackburn ELS will be provided with these policies.

Volunteer workers will also be expected to act consistently with the DE&T's policies, to the extent that they apply to volunteer workers, including the Department's policies relating to Equal Opportunity/Anti-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and 'Workplace Bullying'. Volunteers at Blackburn ELS will be provided with these policies.

Blackburn ELS will provide any appropriate induction and/or training for all volunteer workers. The Principal (or their nominee) will determine what induction and/or training is necessary depending on what type of work the volunteer will be engaged in.

All volunteers will be provided with induction in relation to Blackburn ELS's child safe practices, including reporting obligations and procedures. The school has a Child Safe Reporting Obligations Policy with which all staff and volunteers will be provided.

The Principal (or their nominee) will determine what supervision, if any, of volunteers is required for the type of work being performed.

The Principal has the discretion to make a decision about the ongoing suitability of a volunteer worker and may determine at any time whether or not a person is suitable to volunteer at Blackburn ELS.

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 the Schools' Privacy Policy and the Department's policy on Privacy and Information Sharing.

Under these policies, student information can and should be shared with relevant school staff to:

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

Volunteers must immediately report any child safety concerns that they become aware of to a member of staff to ensure appropriate action. There are some circumstances where volunteers may also be obliged to disclose information to authorities outside of the school such as to Victoria Police. For further information on child safety responding and reporting obligations refer to: *Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures*.

Records management

While it is unlikely volunteers will be responsible for any school records during their volunteer work, any school records that volunteers are responsible for must be provided to the Office Manager at each campus to ensure they are managed in accordance with the Department's policy: Records Management – Schools.

Compensation

Personal injury

Volunteer workers are covered by the Department of Education and Training's Workers Compensation Policy if they suffer personal injury in the course of engaging in school work.

Property damage

If a volunteer worker suffers damage to their property in the course of carrying out school work, the Minister (or delegate) may authorise such compensation as they consider reasonable in the circumstances. Claims of this nature should be directed to the Principal who will direct them to the Department's Legal Division.

Public liability insurance

The DE&T's public liability insurance policy applies when a volunteer worker engaged in school work is legally liable for:

- a claim for bodily injury to a third party
- damage to or the destruction of a third party's property.

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways

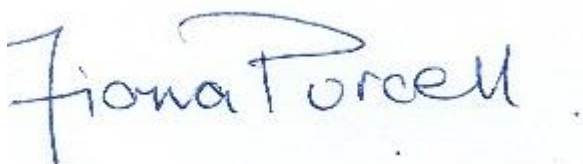
- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in induction processes for relevant staff
- Included as a link in all invitations to prospective volunteers

RELATED POLICIES

Statement of Values and Pedagogy, Visitors Policy, Statement of Commitment to Child Safety, Child Safe Standards Policy and the Child Safe Code of Conduct.

ENDORSEMENT

This **Volunteers Policy** was endorsed by the School Council of Blackburn ELS on Tuesday 31 August 2022.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Fiona Purcell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'F' and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Fiona Purcell
School Council President

This Policy will be reviewed in August 2024.