

## VOLUNTEERS POLICY

### RATIONALE

Brunswick South West Primary School (BSWPS) recognises that education is a collaborative partnership involving staff, parents, caregivers and members of the community. We encourage all our school families to actively participate in the life of the school, and we value and appreciate the contributions – large and small – of all those who generously volunteer. Our school is greatly enriched by the diverse skills and capacities contributed by community members willing to give of their time, goodwill and expertise, to support the wellbeing and learning of our children. The active engagement of our community in school activities is a significant part of BSWPS's inclusive, friendly, welcoming and vibrant culture.

We recognise it is important that volunteers and visitors feel welcome and comfortable in a friendly school environment that values their input. We want to ensure that the involvement of our volunteers is a rewarding experience and that volunteers receive encouragement, guidance, support and recognition.

At the same time, we recognise that the welfare of our students is our highest priority. We have legal obligations to comply with, including our duty of care to children and staff, to provide a safe and secure environment. We are bound by laws that require a Working With Children Check (WWC Check) for adults undertaking child-related work in a school, and must adhere to Department policies regarding suitability checks for volunteers. BSWPS is committed to implementing practices outlined in this policy, which protect the safety and wellbeing of children, staff and volunteers. These practices ensure that our volunteers are suitable to work with children and are well placed to make a positive contribution to our school community.

### PURPOSE

To outline the processes that BSWPS 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 our school.

### DEFINITIONS

*Child-related work:* 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 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 (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.

## POLICY

BSWPS is committed to implementing and following practices which protect the safety and wellbeing of children and our staff and volunteers. BSWPS recognises the valuable contribution that volunteers provide to our school community and the work that we do, and commit to provide them with the training and procedural knowledge to enable them to carry out this work in a safe and compliant manner.

The procedures set out below are designed to ensure that BSWPS's volunteers are suitable to work with children and are well-placed to make a positive contribution to our school community.

### Becoming a volunteer

Members of our school community who would like to volunteer can seek opportunities in a variety of ways including speaking with the classroom teacher, responding to requests sent via Compass, the Newsletter and Class Reps.

At the beginning of each year there will be opportunities for those wishing to volunteer in a classroom to have some training from leadership. The volunteer will also be taken through an OHS induction, this policy, and introduced to the Child Safe Standards.

### Suitability checks including Working with Children Checks

#### *Working with students*

BSWPS values the many volunteers that assist in our classrooms, with sports events, excursions, school performances, working bees, fete other events and programs. To ensure that we are meeting our legal obligations under the *Working With Children Act 2005* (Vic) and the Child Safe Standards, BSWPS is required to undertake suitability checks which may include a Working With Children Check, proof of identity, work history involving children and/or reference checks.

Considering our legal obligations, and our commitment to ensuring that BSWPS is a child safe environment, we will require volunteers to obtain a WWC Check and produce their valid card to a member of leadership or administration staff for verification in the following circumstances:

- **Volunteers who are not parent/family members** of any student at the school are required to have a WWC Check 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, for example working in the library, regardless of whether their own child is participating or not.
- **Parent/community School Council members** in the event of sitting on School Council with Student School Council members, regardless of whether their own child is a student member or not.

In addition, depending on the nature of the volunteer work, our school may ask the volunteer to provide other suitability checks at its discretion (for example, references, work history involving children and/or qualifications). Proof of identity may also be required in some circumstances.

### ***Non child-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, school council, participating in sub-committees of school council, fete coordination, working on fete stalls, other fundraising groups that meet in the evenings or out of school hours or off-site, during which children will not be, or would not reasonably be expected to be, present without being under the supervision of their parent/carer.

Volunteers for this type of work are not required to have Working with Children or other suitability checks as they are not engaged in child-related work and children are not generally present during these activities. However, BSWPS reserves the right to undertake suitability checks, including proof of identity, Working with Children Checks, at its discretion if considered necessary for any particular activities or circumstances.

School council members and volunteers on any sub-committee of school council will be asked to provide a valid WWC Check. Whilst we acknowledge that 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, we believe that it is important that our volunteers who are involved in making important decisions about our school which will have an impact on students do have a valid WWC Check.

### **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 our school's policies, including, but not limited to our Child Safety Policy / Statement of Commitment to Child Safety, our Child Safety Code of Conduct and our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures, and Statement of Values and School Philosophy. Volunteer workers will also be expected to act consistently with Department of Education and Training policies, to the extent that they apply to volunteer workers, including the Department's policies relating to Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Workplace Bullying.

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 BSWPS.

BSWPS 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 induction in relation to BSWPS's child safety practices, including reporting obligations and procedures. Our school has a Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy which all staff and volunteers should be aware of.

Volunteers will be inducted annually by a member of the leadership or administration team and a copy of their WWCC will be recorded prior to commencing any activities.

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

## **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 Department of Education and Training'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.

## **RELATED POLICIES AND RESOURCES**

[Suitability Check Flowchart for Schools](#)

[School Policy and Advisory Guide – Suitability Checks for School Volunteers and Visitors](#)

Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures

The *Working With Children Act 2005* (Vic)

The Child Safe Standards

*Statement of Values*

*Visitors Policy*

*Statement of Commitment to Child Safety/Child Safe Policy*

*Child Safety Code of Conduct*

## **REVIEW CYCLE**

This policy was last updated June 2020 and is scheduled for review in June 2023