Brunswick South West Primary School

Volunteers Policy

Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Brunswick South West Primary School on 03 9387 6886 or brunswick.sw.ps@education.vic.gov.au.

Purpose

To outline the processes that Brunswick South West Primary School 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-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 (i.e., indemnified) from action by others in the event of an injury or accident whilst they are performing volunteer schoolwork in good faith.

Policy

Brunswick South West Primary School is committed to implementing and following practices which protect the safety and wellbeing of children and our staff and volunteers. Brunswick South West Primary School also recognises the valuable contribution that volunteers provide to our school community and the work that we do.

Brunswick South West Primary School 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.

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

1. Becoming a volunteer

Members of our school community who would like to volunteer are encouraged to:

- sign up for a volunteer induction session with the Principal

- let the class teacher or other volunteer coordinator know

- apply for a Working with Children Check

2. Suitability checks including Working with Children Clearances

Working with students

Brunswick South West Primary School values the many volunteers that assist in our classrooms and with sports, camps, excursions, concerts and other School events and programs. To ensure that we are meeting our legal obligations under the *Worker Screening Act* and the Child Safe Standards, Brunswick South West Primary School is required to undertake suitability checks which in most cases 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.

Considering our legal obligations, and our commitment to ensuring that Brunswick South West Primary School is a child safe environment, we will require volunteers to obtain a WWC clearance and produce their valid card to the office for verification in the following circumstances:

- **Volunteers who are <u>not</u> 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 or not
- **Parent/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

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, event coordination, other fundraising activities during which children will not be, or would not reasonably be expected to be, present.

At Brunswick South West Primary School, volunteers for this type of work will still be required to provide a valid WWC Clearance.

School council members and volunteers on any sub-committee of School Council will be asked to provide evidence of a valid WWC Clearance. 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 Clearance.

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, Brunswick South West Primary School may also require volunteers to complete additional child safety training.

3. 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 and our Child Safety Code of Conduct.

Volunteer workers will also be expected to act consistently with Department of Education 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 (or their nominee) 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 wellbeing of students.

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 Brunswick South West Primary School.

4. 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, wellbeing 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; 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.*

5. 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 Principal or Assistant Principal to ensure they are managed in accordance with the Department's policy: Records Management – Schools.

6. Compensation

Personal injury

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

Property damage

If a volunteer worker suffers damage to their property in the course of carrying out schoolwork, 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's public liability insurance policy applies when a volunteer worker engaged in schoolwork 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
- Included in our staff handbook
- Discussed in an annual staff meeting
- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies on the Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL):

- Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination
- Child Safe Standards
- Privacy and Information Sharing
- Records Management – School Records
- Sexual Harassment
- Volunteers in Schools
- Volunteer OHS Management
- Working with Children and Other Suitability Checks for School Volunteers and Visitors
- Workplace Bullying

RELATED POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Brunswick South West Primary School policies and resources relevant to this policy include:

- *Statement of Values and School Philosophy*
- *Visitors Policy*
- *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy*
- *Child Safety Code of Conduct*
- *Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures*
- *Inclusion and Diversity Policy*
- *Brunswick South West Primary School Child Safety Induction Pack*

Department policies:

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POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	May 2025
Consultation	School Council - May 26, 2025
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	May 2027