

## VOLUNTEERS IN SCHOOLS POLICY

### Rationale

- Volunteers add significant value to the human resources available to the school and consequently deserve encouragement, effective management, support and recognition.
- Volunteer school workers are not liable in any civil proceedings for anything done, or not done, in good faith in providing a community service.
- Volunteer school workers are covered by the Department's Workers Compensation policy if they suffer personal injury in the course of engaging in school work.

### Aims

- To explain the legal rights of volunteer workers in the school.
- To provide assurance to our volunteer workers regarding their legal rights and responsibilities.
- To ensure the Northern School for Autism complies with DET policy and guidelines and legislative requirements of the
  - *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* - sections 5.6.2, 5.6.3
  - *Workers Compensation Act 1958*
  - *Wrongs Act 1958* – section 37(1)
- To ensure the school complies with Child Safe Standards 1 & 2.

### Definition

A volunteer school worker is a person who voluntarily engages in school work or approved community work, without payment or reward.

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 any 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 well protected from legal action by others.

**Important:** "Voluntary" work carried out to meet Centrelink requirements

People who perform unpaid work in schools under the "Work for the Dole" program and "Community Work" programs administered by Centrelink have insurance cover provided by the Federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, and may perform work in schools.

Other Centrelink benefit recipients involved in "voluntary" work in order to fulfil their recipient obligations are not covered by an Australian Government insurance scheme. Schools may however accept this group of Centrelink

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benefit recipients to work as volunteers in Victorian government schools and note that they are insured by the Department.

### **Implementation**

- The safety and wellbeing of children is this school's highest priority.
- The safety of all workers at the school also is a very high priority.
- Volunteers are actively encouraged to engage in school activities and will be invited to do so.
- The school will assess and verify the suitability of volunteers, see: [Suitability Checks for School Volunteers and Visitors](#)
- The Principal has the discretion as to the ongoing suitability of a volunteer working in their school and may determine at any time whether a person is suitable to volunteer at the school.

#### **Managing Volunteers**

- A volunteer is expected to comply with any reasonable direction of a Principal (or their nominee). This will include the requirement to agree and abide by the school's Child Safety Policy/Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- Volunteers will be inducted, trained and supervised according to the school's procedures for staff/volunteer induction and management. This includes being familiar with school level procedures for identifying and reporting suspected child abuse.
- Volunteers will be required to register at the administration office daily, and wear a visitors badge whilst in the school. Volunteers will be invited to use the staff room and facilities.
- Volunteers must be provided with any completed risk assessments and Safe Work Procedures for each item of restricted plant or equipment.
- The Principal should notify the Employee Conduct Branch as soon as possible after becoming aware of a reportable allegation involving a volunteer, so that the Employee Conduct Branch can assess the allegations and report them to the CCYP, if appropriate. See: [Reportable Conduct Scheme](#)

#### **Failure to Protect**

- Any staff member in a position of authority (Principals, Assistant Principals, and Campus Principals), who becomes aware that an adult associated with their organisation (such as an employee, contractor, volunteer or visitor) poses a risk of sexual abuse to a child under the care, authority or supervision of the organisation, must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce that risk. This may include, for example, removing the adult from child-related work pending investigation. If a staff member in a position of authority fails to take reasonable steps in these circumstances, this may amount to a criminal offence.
- Volunteers will be inducted into the Northern School for Autism - the induction includes discussions on confidentiality and Occupational Health and Safety.
- Volunteers will be provided with any support or instruction necessary to help them perform their tasks at NSA in a confident and effective manner.
- In compliance with the Victorian Information Privacy Act 2000 and Health Records Act 2001, volunteers are to maintain complete confidentiality regarding issues that relate to children, staff and/or other members of the school community.
- Volunteers should maintain appropriate standards of conduct at all times. Volunteers are required to carry out tasks in a manner consistent with school values.
- Volunteers are expected to respect the professional standing and roles of school staff members.
- The Principal of NSA or the School Council may terminate any invitation to a person to volunteer.
- Volunteers may be sought formally through the newsletter, written invitations and personal approaches and informally, by any member of staff, through conversation and opportunity.
- The ability of a volunteer to fulfil the requirements of the role is assessed by the Assistant Principal in consultation with members of the leadership team as necessary.
- In Term 1 of each year, the School Council will be presented with a list of volunteers working within NSA for approval.
- Volunteers are registered through the Assistant Principal, who records the details of the WWCC.
- Maintenance of the volunteer database is the responsibility of an Education Support Staff member (administration).

- Volunteers will be invited to use the staffroom and facilities.
- Volunteers are to approach the classroom teacher, team leader, Assistant Principal or Principal with any concerns.
- Volunteer workers undertaking schoolwork on behalf of, and with the approval of, the School Council or Principal are indemnified as to their personal liability in similar terms to teachers.
- A volunteer school worker who suffers injury arising out of, or in the course of, engaging in any school work is entitled to be paid compensation in accordance with the provisions of the Workers Compensation Act 1995.
- If a volunteer school worker suffers damage to his or her property in the course of carrying out school work, the Minister may authorise such compensation as the Minister thinks reasonable in the circumstances. Claims of this nature are to be directed to:
  - Legal Division
  - People & Executive Services
  - Department of Education and Training
  - Level 3, 2 Treasury Place
  - East Melbourne 3002
- It is the responsibility of the School Council appointed Coordinator to ensure that volunteers working at working bees comply with OH&S requirements. For further information, please refer to the website below with links to Volunteer Workers and Working Bees.
- The Principal needs to:
  - Refer to the Department's Volunteer Work and Working Bee Procedure for processes and role accountabilities.
  - Check that volunteer workers have a current Working with Children's Check, where applicable.
  - Check relevant Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS) are completed prior to volunteer workers performing high risk tasks.
  - Provide relevant Safe Work Procedures (SWP) for tasks identified as high risk.
  - Induct volunteer workers using the Volunteer Work and Working Bee OHS Induction Checklist prior to working on site.
  - Report any volunteer worker or employee injury on [eduSafe](#).
  - Provide first aid information to any persons coming on site.
  - Ensure children on site are appropriately supervised, if applicable.
  - Provide details of the Emergency Management Plan and procedures including evacuations points to all persons on site.
- The Principal will determine the types of works to be undertaken by volunteer workers and assess the level of risk associated with the works. Examples of volunteer work include:
  - parents assisting in a classroom
  - gardening/landscaping
  - painting
  - clean-up of grounds
  - school fete
  - theatre performances or presentation days
  - school excursions
  - school camps
- The Principal and/or Management OHS Nominee will not to engage a volunteer worker for any high risk tasks, including:
  - [confined space](#) entry
  - demolition works
  - hazardous [manual handling](#)
  - [hot works](#) (e.g. welding)
  - powered mobile [plant](#) ( e.g. forklift)

- removal or disturbance of asbestos
- temporary supports for structural alterations
- tilt-up or precast concrete
- trenches or shafts deeper than one and half metres
- use of explosives
- use of [Hazardous Substances and Dangerous Goods](#)
- working at height (two metres or more)
- works in tunnels
- Work that is in, on or near:
  - artificial temperature extremes (e.g. work in an operating cool room or freezer)
  - chemical, fuel or refrigerant lines
  - contaminated or flammable atmospheres
  - electrical installations or services
  - pressurised gas distribution mains or piping
  - roads
  - telecommunications towers
  - water/liquids that pose a drowning risk
- The Principal will not engage a volunteer worker to use any high risk power tools, including:
 

Rip Saw (Table Saw, Bench Saw)	Grinder (Pedestal or Bench)
Band Saw or Panel Saw	Buzzer (Surface Planer)
Docking Saw (Cross-Cut Saw, Radial Arm Saw)	Thickneser
Triton Work Centre	Spindle Moulder
Portable Circular Saw	Power Wood Shaper
Circular Saw Table	Portable Planer
Slide Compound Mitre Saw & Compound Mitre Saw	Metal Cut-off Saw
Reciprocating Saw	Table Inverted Router
Guillotine (Powered or manually-operated)	Portable Plunge Router (unsecured) i.e. without template or guide fence
- The Principal will ensure that all electrical equipment brought onto the site has been tested and tagged prior to use.

#### Volunteer Worker OHS Induction

The Principal, OHS Nominee and/or other suitably qualified person must induct all volunteer workers using the [Volunteer Worker OHS Induction Checklist](#), or equivalent template.

- All volunteer workers must be made aware of the school's first aid arrangements.
- Any volunteer injury will be reported on eduSafe.
- Further information will be obtained from DET's [Contractor and Volunteer Worker OHS Management](#) document.
- Please refer also to the school's *Working with Children (Suitability) Check – Volunteers & Visitors Policy*, the *Visitors to the School Policy* and the Child Safe Standards.

### **Evaluation**

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle or if guidelines change (latest DET update A-Z Index late July 2018).

### **References**

Working With Children Check - Department of Justice's Working with Children Information Line:  
1300 652 879

Victorian Government Schools' Reference Guide.

[www.education.vic.gov.au/management/governance/referenceguide/default.htm](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/governance/referenceguide/default.htm)

[www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/community/Pages/volunteers.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/community/Pages/volunteers.aspx)

This policy was first ratified by NSA School Council on 14 June, 2012

This update was ratified by NSA School Council August 2015

This update was ratified by NSA School Council February 2016

This update was ratified on 6 December 2018