



WORKING WITH CHILDREN (SUITABILITY) CHECKS – VOLUNTEERS & VISITORS

Background

- Schools are required to exercise their legal obligations in regard to suitability checks, including Working with Children Checks for adults who work with children at schools, and for work undertaken by school visitors and volunteers.
- In order to adequately discharge their duty of care schools are legally required to take reasonable steps to minimise the risks of reasonable foreseeable harm to their students: see [Duty of Care](#)
- Schools and School Councils 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 employees, visitors and volunteers.
- Schools and School Councils are also required to establish and implement school-level policies and procedures to assess and verify the suitability of adults who engage in child-connected work.
- Working with Children Checks are required by law only for people who engage in child-related work, unless an exemption applies (e.g. parent supervising their own child, Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registered teacher, police officer).
- However, the law only sets out the minimum requirements for who must have a WWC check and schools can require, as school policy, that other people who will be attending the school as visitors, volunteers, employees or contractors to have a WWC check.
- To assist in determining whether a person (employee, volunteer, visitor) will be engaged in child-related or child-connected work, and thus what suitability checks may be appropriate, see: [Working with Children check flowchart \(docx - 111.5kb\)](#)
- For child-connected work, it is up to each school to determine whether they will require WWC Checks for individuals, based on the nature of the person's interaction with children. Each school is unique and what checks are required should reflect the risks of each individual school setting, the school community and what duties the individual will be performing.
- Schools are encouraged to develop their own specific policies and practices, keeping in mind the broad intent of the Child Safe Standards to embed a child safe culture that has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Note: Suitability requirements for both child-related and child connected work apply to adult volunteers and visitors to the school, including contractors.

Purpose

- To ensure volunteers and visitors approved to work with children at this school meet the legal requirements of the *Working with Children Act 2005*.
- To ensure children under our care are protected from exposure to inappropriate people.
- To ensure all people engaged in 'child related work' with our students have Working with Children Checks.
- To provide an environment that is safe and secure.
- To minimise risk of harm to children by requiring volunteers and visitors to Preston South Primary School to provide evidence that they have appropriate approvals to work with children in accordance with legislation and Department policy.
- To ensure the school has strategies to enhance compliance with the Child Safe Standards 2 and 4.
- To ensure the school discharges its duty of care towards children.

Definitions

Child-related work:

- involves an adult working with under 18 years old (both paid and unpaid work);
- having direct contact with children (physical, face-to-face, written, oral or electronic contact) and;
- is a usual part of the person's duties (and is not occasional or incidental to their work).

A WWC Check is required for anyone engaging in 'child-related work' regardless of whether contact with a child is supervised by another person or not. This means even if a volunteer or visitor is supervised by a teacher, they must still have (and provide evidence of) a WWC Check if they intend to engage in 'child related work'.

A WWC Check is not legally required if the person:

- qualifies for an exemption (e.g. Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registered teacher, police officer, parent whose child is participating or ordinarily participates in the relevant activity, or person working with a child who is closely related to them)
- is supervising a student in practical training organised by their educational institution
- takes part in an activity with a child in the same way that a child participates. e.g. as other players in a chess team.

For more guidance on when a WWC Check is legally required, see the [Working with Children Checks](#) website.

More broadly defined than child-related work, child-connected work is authorised by the Principal, School Council or Department and performed by an adult in a school environment (including online and school camps) when children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Implementation

- The safety and wellbeing of every child at the school is our highest priority.
- The school will inform volunteers and visitors of the need to have a Working with Children Check.
- In assessing what suitability checks should be made, the school will consider what (if any) level of risk is acceptable or reasonable in the circumstances, and adopt appropriate risk mitigation strategies. Strategies may include:
 - considering how much time the individual spends on school premises to perform their work while children are present
 - considering whether the individual will be able to move freely around the school without staff members accompanying them or in close proximity to staff members
 - adding a clause in contractor service agreements about the need to comply with the Child Safe Standards
 - taking reasonable precautions to supervise individuals, including their contact with children, where this is considered necessary
- As a general rule, the following child-related work will require WWC Checks:
 - attendant care
 - school camps
 - excursions (including swimming)
 - literacy and numeracy support
 - homework clubs, breakfast lunch clubs and other student support activities
 - distance education

POSITIONS:

- classroom/library assistant
- sporting/musical and other extracurricular coaches
- canteen and uniform shop assistant
- allied health/NDIS therapists
- Department staff who are working with children

- Special Religious Instruction practitioners

Note: Parents/carers are legally exempt from the requirement to hold a WWC Check when volunteering in an activity in which their child normally participates. In this instance requiring a WWC Check is at the discretion of the school - but is recommended where the parent is regularly involved in the volunteer activity and working directly with children, and/or the nature of the activity poses a higher risk, e.g. overnight camps, swimming or activities involving close contact, etc.

- As a general rule, the following child-connected work will require a WWC Check:

ACTIVITIES:

- fete / fundraising activities
- working bee assistance (outside school hours)
- parents and friends clubs

POSITIONS:

- external tradespeople, e.g. gardening, building and grounds maintenance

- A volunteer, visitor or contractor can commence work in the school when they provide a receipt as proof they have applied for a WWC Check with the Department of Justice.
- Under legislation the school must make reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record information about a person who they are proposing to engage in child-connected work, in accordance with legal requirements and the school's own policy. This may include:
 - confirming identity e.g. drivers licence or other photo identification
 - WWC Check
 - confirming professional qualifications
 - National Police Record Check
 - personal references that address the persons suitability for the job and working with children.
- All people required to have Working with Children checks are issued a WWC Check Card which School Council expects will be photocopied by school staff and that person's name added to the school's register of 'approved volunteers and others as above.' Only persons on the school register are able to work or volunteer at the school or during school related activities.
- School Council requires that all persons directly involved in school camps, excursions, sleep-overs, teaching of swimming lessons, transport of children without staff members present (rare), extra-curricular activities such as school sporting teams etc. all must have WWC Checks.
- School Council will consider other activities such as incursions on a case-by-case basis.
- For further information the school will refer to the website below.
- Please refer also to the school's *Volunteer Workers Policy*, *Visitors to the School Policy*, the *Safety of Children Working with External Providers (Incursions) Policy*, the *Working with Children Checks – Staff 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 late January 2019).

This update was ratified by School Council.....

Reference:

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/community/Pages/volunteers.aspx

Applying for the WWC Check

The WWC Check is conducted by the Department of Justice. Applications must be lodged at one of the participating Australia Post outlets in Victoria. For a list of Australia Post outlets where a WWC Check application may be made see: www.auspost.com.au.

WWC Check applicants need to complete an online 'Application for WWC Check' form at www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren before going to a participating Australia Post outlet with proof of identity documents to lodge the application.

If the employee passes the WWC Check s/he will be issued a WWC Card which also acts as an 'Assessment Notice'. An Assessment Notice means the employee has passed the WWC Check and may work in 'child-related work'.

A WWC Check applicant who is issued with an Interim Negative Notice or a Negative Notice should contact the Working with Children Unit within the Department of Justice, telephone 1300 652 879 to discuss any right of appeal that may exist or visit their website for further information at: www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren