

# Volunteers Policy

## 1. *Rationale-*

Pakenham Springs Primary School recognises the valuable contribution that volunteers provide to our school community and the work that we do.

Volunteer workers on Pakenham Springs Primary School property are covered by the Occupation Health and Safety Act and hence the school has specific responsibilities concerning their health and wellbeing.

Volunteers may be community members who assist in working bees, reading to students, gaining training for further education, serving at the canteen or assist during school events such as swimming, athletics carnivals, fetes and other fundraising activities or in many other capacities. Volunteers must provide a valid Working with Children's card and be approved by the Principal on behalf of School Council, as outlined below in this Policy.

Some activities should not be undertaken by volunteers unless they are suitably qualified - for example:

- using a chain saw, an angle grinder or other machinery and tools where specific training is required
- working at heights

## 2. *Purpose of Policy-*

This policy outlines the processes that Pakenham Springs 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.

## 3. *Implementation Guidelines-*

### 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.

Pakenham Springs Primary School is committed to implementing and following practices which protect the safety and wellbeing of children and our staff and volunteers.

The procedures set out below are designed to ensure that Pakenham Springs Primary School'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 are encouraged to speak to the classroom teachers or the office staff to indicate their willingness and availability. Classroom Helpers training sessions will be held in Term 1 each year to inform community members of the duties and responsibilities involved.

If volunteers are required for excursions or camps, this will be indicated on the Compass consent forms. The process for selecting volunteers is outlined in the *Excursions and Incursions* policy and the *Education Outdoors (Camps)* policy.

### **Working with students**

Pakenham Springs Primary School values the many volunteers that assist in the classroom and within our school programs. To ensure that we are meeting our legal obligations under the *Working With Children Act 2005* (Vic) and the Child Safe Standards, Pakenham Springs Primary School 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 Pakenham Springs Primary School is a child safe environment, we will require volunteers to obtain a WWC Check and produce their valid card to our office 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, including classroom support, regardless of whether their own child is participating 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, parents and friends club coordination, school council, participating in sub-committees of school council, fete or event coordination, or other fundraising groups that meet in the evenings during which children will not be, or would not reasonably be expected to be, present.

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, Pakenham Springs Primary School 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, our Child Safety Code of Conduct and our School Philosophy Policy. 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 Pakenham Springs Primary School.

Pakenham Springs Primary School 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 Pakenham Springs Primary School'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.

The principal (or their nominee) 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.

## **4. Evaluation-**

This policy was last reviewed in May 2019 and was approved by school council in June 2019. It is scheduled for review in June 2022.

This policy is published on the Pakenham Springs Primary School website.