

VOLUNTEER POLICY

RATIONALE:

Findon Primary School is committed to implementing and following practices which protect the safety and wellbeing of children, staff and volunteers. Findon recognises the valuable contribution that volunteers provide to our school community and the support of the work that we do. This policy applies to the recruitment, screening, supervision and management of all people who volunteer at our school.

AIM:

To outline the processes that Findon 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.

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/caregiver, parent/caregiver's spouse or domestic partner, stepparent, parent/caregivers 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 community group 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.

IMPLEMENTATION:

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

The school will adhere to any Department of Education and Training (DET) requirements relating to Covid-19.

Becoming a volunteer

Members of our school community who would like to volunteer are encouraged to make contact with the office.

Suitability checks including Working with Children Clearances Working with students

Ratified by School Council Oct 2021
Review date Oct 2024

Findon PS values the many volunteers that assist in our classrooms/with sports events/school productions/and other events and programs. To ensure that we are meeting our legal obligations under the *Worker Screening Act* and the Child Safe Standards, Findon PS 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 and work history involving children checks.

Considering our legal obligations, and our commitment to ensuring that Findon PS 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 not parent-caregiver/family members** of any student at the school if they are engaged in child related work regardless of whether they are being supervised. This is a requirement
- **Parent-caregiver/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. This is a requirement
- **Parent-caregiver/family volunteers** who assist with excursions (including swimming), camps and similar events, regardless of whether their own child is participating or not.
- **Parent-caregiver/family volunteers** who regularly assist in school activities, regardless of whether their own child is participating or not
- **Parent-caregiver/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/caregivers 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, Community Link coordination, School Council, participating in sub-committees 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 WWC Clearances or other suitability checks as they are not engaged in child related work and children are not generally present during these activities. However, Findon PS reserves the right to undertake suitability checks, including requiring proof of identity and WWC Clearance, at its discretion, if considered necessary for any particular activities or circumstances. School council members and volunteers on any subcommittee 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.

Management and supervision

Volunteer workers will be expected to comply with any reasonable direction of the Principal. 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 Statement of Values and School Philosophy. Volunteer workers will also be expected to act consistently with Department of Education and Training (DET) 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 Findon PS.

Findon PS will provide any appropriate induction and/or training for all volunteer workers. The Principal will determine what induction and/or training is necessary depending on what type of work the volunteer will be engaged in and will ensure a record is kept of the induction undertaken.

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

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.

EVALUATION & COMMUNICATION:

This policy will be communicated to our school community through the school website and via the front office. The policy will be tabled at staff briefing and be a part of staff and volunteer induction processes such as family information book, including School Council. The policy will be reviewed as a part of the schools three year review cycle.

REFERENCE:

Findon School Policies

<https://www.findonps.vic.edu.au/index.php/school-policies/>

DET Policy Working with Children Check

<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/suitability-checks/policy>

Worker Screening Act

<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/as-made/acts/worker-screening-act-2020>

Suitability Check Flowchart