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Volunteers Policy

Purpose

To outline the processes that Fernbrook 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:

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.
- Any activity carried out for the welfare of a school, by the school Board of Directors, Parents and Friends committee 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 Board of Directors.
- Providing assistance in the work of any school or kindergarten.
- Attending meetings where the volunteer is requested by the school.

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 (ie indemnified) from action by others in the event of an injury or accident whilst they are performing volunteer school work in good faith.

Policy

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

The procedures set out below are designed to ensure that Fernbrook 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

Anyone wishing to become a volunteer, either for a one-off event or on a more regular basis, should approach their child's class teacher, the Principal, or the Business Manager.

Before starting in the school and to ensure the safety of our students at all times, all volunteers will be required to obtain a Working with Children Check (WWCC) except for the following groups who are exempt:

- teachers registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching,
- sworn police officers and
- people under the age of 18.

The WWCC is free for volunteers and can be applied for online at www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au

Volunteers are asked to produce their valid WWCC card at the office where it will be photocopied and the copy will be kept on file, or they may link their WWCC to our school online for verification.

All volunteers should be aware of this Volunteer Policy and appropriate training that is available, where relevant.

Suitability checks including Working with Children Check

Working with students

Fernbrook School values the volunteers that assist in our classrooms and day to day operations, with sporting events, camps, excursions, school concerts and other events and programs. To ensure that we are meeting our legal obligations under the Working With Children Act 2005 (Vic) and the Child Safe Standards, Fernbrook School is required to undertake suitability checks which includes a Working with Children Check. Additional suitability checks may also be required depending on the volunteer role, such as references, proof of identity, qualifications and work history involving children checks.

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, working bees or maintenance on weekends during which children will not be, or would not reasonably be expected to be, present.

At Fernbrook School, volunteers for this type of work will still be required to provide a valid WWCC except for the following groups who are exempt

- teachers registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching,
- sworn police officers and
- people under the age of 18. .

School board members and volunteers from the Parents and Friends committee are asked to provide a valid WWCC. 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 have an impact on students, do have a valid WWCC.

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 codes of conduct referred to on our website and ensure the actions and requirements in these documents are followed when volunteering for our school. A Child Safety Code of Conduct and a Staff Code of Conduct must both be signed and handed in at the office where they will be kept on file by the school.

Depending on the nature and responsibilities of their role, Fernbrook School may also require volunteers to complete additional child safety training.

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, our Staff Code of Conduct and our Philosophy and Culture Document.

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 (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 Fernbrook School.

Privacy and information-sharing

Volunteers must ensure that any student information they become aware of because of their volunteer work is managed sensitively and acts in accordance with all Child Safety related documents.

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.

Confidentiality

Volunteers must ensure that any information they obtain during the course of their volunteer work, is kept confidential and must not be disclosed unless they are legally required to do so. This includes discussing the behaviour, disabilities, or academic progress of individual students, or personal information about staff and students.

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 to ensure they are managed in accordance with the Records Management Policy.

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.

Communication

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Included in staff induction processes.
- Available publicly on our school's website.
- Available in hard copy in the Policies and Procedures Manual in the school office.

Related Policies and Procedures

All of these are available on our Planning and Policies page:

- Philosophy and Culture Document.
- Visitors Policy.
- Child Safety Policy.
- Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- Staff Code of Conduct.
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures.

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Implemented by: The Principal

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