



catholic education commission of victoria ltd

ACN 119 459 853

GUIDELINES ON THE

Engagement of Volunteers

IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

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Child safety must be a key focus in the selection and recruitment of volunteers in Catholic schools.

Guiding Principles for Volunteers

Overarching 'philosophical' statement or belief:

- When Catholic schools, families and the broader community work together, schools improve and communities flourish.
- Volunteers are a valued and vital aspect of Catholic education.

Volunteers in Catholic schools:

- contribute to the pool of resources available build a shared sense of community
- create opportunities for community connection, involvement and engagement
- strengthen the connection between schools, families, parishes and community.

Benefits

School communities

- extend opportunities to broaden the perspectives and voices contributing to the life of the school;
- have an opportunity to share understandings about the life of the school, about learning and about the community.

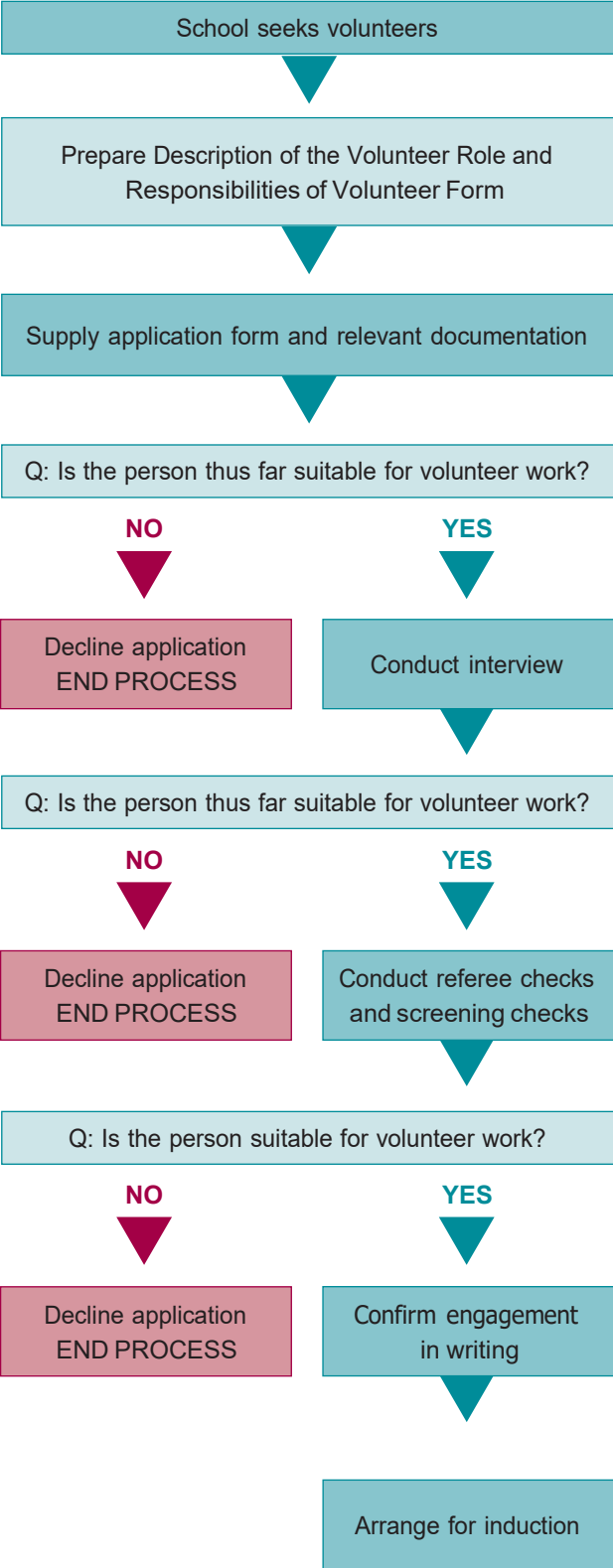
Volunteers

- have an opportunity to be part of the learning process for children and young people;
- can develop an enhanced sense of personal satisfaction from having an opportunity to give back, to share skills, experience and expertise, and to learn.

Students

- can interact with a range of role models and adults from the community;
- have opportunities to learn from and be exposed to a broad range of skills and expertise;
- have an opportunity to experience a model of the spirit of altruism or the nature of giving.

Flowchart – Process for the Recruitment & Selection of Volunteers



Monitorin
g
continuing
suitability

General

1. Introduction

The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) Guidelines on the Engagement of Volunteers in Catholic Schools (Guidelines for Volunteers) are designed to assist principals (and, where relevant, employers) with the process of selecting and engaging suitable volunteers in Catholic schools. A key focus of the Guidelines for Volunteers is to assist schools to meet minimum legislative requirements in relation to volunteers and child safety.

It is recommended that principals and employers discuss and agree that the processes outlined in the Guidelines for Volunteers will be applied in relation to the engagement of volunteers at the school.¹

In addition to outlining the process for engaging new volunteers for specific volunteer positions and for volunteer work more generally, the Guidelines for Volunteers also contain recommended steps relevant to volunteers currently working at the school (see [Part 14: Existing volunteers](#)).

In some situations, schools may have religious persons working at the school on an unpaid basis (the relevant order may or may not receive a stipend). If the role being performed involves significant student contact or would otherwise be performed by a paid employee, it is recommended that schools apply the process outlined in the [CECV Guidelines for Employment of Staff in Catholic Schools](#) available from the CECV website at www.cecv.catholic.edu.au. Otherwise, these Guidelines for Volunteers should be applied.

Attachment 1 contains a checklist that summarises the key steps from the Guidelines for Volunteers. The checklist should not be considered a substitute for reading the Guidelines.

While these Guidelines are intended to assist schools with the engagement of volunteers, they are not intended to be legally binding.



Attachment 1: Checklist for the Engagement of Volunteers in Catholic Schools

2. Child safety and wellbeing

Catholic schools have a responsibility to create nurturing school environments where children and young people are respected, their voices are heard and where they are safe and feel safe. This commitment to protecting children must be embedded in the school's leadership, governance, culture and policies.

Child safety and wellbeing must be a key focus in the selection and recruitment of volunteers in Catholic schools. It is envisaged that the processes outlined in the Guidelines for Volunteers not only help to identify the most suitable people to volunteer to work with children, but also deter unsuitable people from applying to volunteer in Catholic schools.

As a result of the new Victorian Child Safe Standards, schools are now required to undergo more vigorous screening and monitoring of volunteers. Under the Child Safe Standards, a 'volunteer' means 'a person who performs work without remuneration or reward for the school or school boarding premises in the school environment or school boarding premises environment'. Schools must comply with a range of obligations that apply specifically when recruiting and engaging volunteers who will be involved in child-connected work, such as stringent reference and work history checks, as well as training and support obligations that apply after a volunteer has been engaged.

Under the Child Safe Standards, 'child-connected work' means work authorised by the school governing authority and 'performed by an adult in a school environment while children are

¹ Ministerial Order 1359 requires that schools 'ensure that people working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice

present or reasonably expected to be present’.

‘School environment’ means any of the following physical, online or virtual places, used during or outside school hours:

- a campus of the school
- online or virtual school environments made available or authorized by the school governing authority for use by a child or student (including email, intranet systems, software applications, collaboration tools, and online services)
- other locations provided by the school or through a third party provider for a child or student to use including, but not limited to, locations used for:
 - camps
 - approved homestay accommodation
 - delivery of education and training such as registered training organisations, TAFEs, non-school senior secondary providers or another school
 - sporting events, excursions, competitions or other events).

These broad definitions mean that most volunteer activities at a school will be subject to the Child Safe Standards.

Catholic schools utilise volunteers in a range of capacities. For example, there are volunteers who regularly assist in the classroom, the canteen, the library, with school sporting activities and as members of the school board. There are also volunteers who assist on one-off or more limited occasions such as accompanying a class on a school excursion, helping out with the school production or participating in a working bee. A large portion of volunteers are parents of students in the school, while others are former students, parents of former students or otherwise drawn from the wider community. The Child Safe Standards do not distinguish between these differing roles. Each of the volunteers in the examples above is likely to be engaged in ‘child-connected work’ and therefore the school must ensure that they comply with the requirements of the Child Safe Standards.

Ministerial Order 1359 – *Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises* imposes the following requirements relating to volunteers:

1. *Schools must ensure that people working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child*

safety and wellbeing values in practice.

2. *When engaging volunteers to undertake child-connected work, volunteers are made aware of the child safety and wellbeing policy and child safety code of conduct of the school.*
3. *When engaging a volunteer to perform child-connected work, the school governing authority must:*
 - a) *sight, verify and record the persons Working with Children clearance, if the person is required to have a clearance in accordance with the Worker Screening Act 2020, or any equivalent background check*
 - b) *consider the child safety risks relevant to the volunteer’s role and, if reasonable and appropriate, collect and record:*
 - i) *proof of the person’s identity*
 - ii) *information about any essential or relevant professional or other qualifications*
 - iii) *the person’s history of work involving children*
 - iv) *references that address the person’s suitability for the job and for working with children.*
4. *The school need not comply with the requirements in clause 3 above if it has already undertaken these activities in relation to a particular individual within the previous 12 months.*
5. *Volunteers engaged in child-connected work must receive an induction regarding child safety and wellbeing that is appropriate to the nature of the role, and which includes:*
 - a) *information on the child safety code of conduct*
 - b) *where relevant to the role, the child safety and wellbeing policy and the procedures for managing complaints and concerns related to child abuse.*
6. *Volunteers engaged in child-connected work must be made aware of their responsibilities to children and students, information sharing and reporting obligations, and record keeping obligations.*
7. *Ongoing supervision and people management of volunteers must focus on child safety and wellbeing.*
8. *Volunteers engaged in child-connected work must receive training and information that will equip them with the knowledge, skills and awareness required to keep*

children and students safe and that is appropriate to the nature and responsibilities of their role.

9. *When determining the type of training and information to provide volunteers, consider whether or not it is reasonable and necessary to include training and information on:*
 - a) *the child safety and wellbeing policy of the school*
 - b) *the child safety code of conduct of the school*
 - c) *guidance on how to recognize indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students*
 - d) *guidance on how to respond effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and support colleagues who disclose harm*
 - e) *guidance on how they can contribute to building culturally safe environments for children and students*
 - f) *guidance on any obligations they have relating to information sharing and recordkeeping*
 - g) *guidance on how to identify and manage child safety risks relevant to the role the volunteer will undertake, without compromising a child or student's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.*

10. *Volunteers must be supported to implement the child safety and wellbeing policy of the school to the extent that it is applicable to their role and responsibilities.*

The Guidelines for Volunteers accord with both the Child Safe Standards and the [CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety](#), available from www.cecv.catholic.edu.au.

3. Other legal obligations

Anti-discrimination and adverse action

In general terms, adverse action and discrimination laws are not specifically directed at protecting volunteers, with the notable exception of sexual harassment laws – sexual harassment of volunteers is unlawful (and is dealt with in the relevant legislation in the same way that it applies to employees).

However, as a matter of social justice and equity, volunteers should be treated on the same basis as employees insofar as discrimination is concerned, and should not be discriminated against by reason of gender, age, race and so on.

Privacy

Schools need to be mindful of privacy laws and any obligations under their school privacy policies that relate to the engagement of volunteers. Privacy laws, namely the Australian Privacy Principles,² are relevant to volunteer screening processes because they contain obligations regarding the use, storage and disclosure of 'personal information' and 'sensitive information'. This information should be treated with respect for the person's privacy. Schools need to develop appropriate safeguards for the collection, retention, use and disclosure of personal information.

In summary, schools are required to do the following:

- **Notify** the applicant that they are collecting personal and/or sensitive information (this is incorporated into [Attachment 4: Template Volunteer Application Form](#)).
- **Obtain consent** for the collection of such information (this is incorporated into [Attachment 4: Template Volunteer Application Form](#)).
- **Use** the information only for purposes that are directly related to the purpose of collecting the information, i.e. for the purposes of determining the person's suitability for volunteer work at the school.
- **Ensure accuracy** of the information contained in any records.
- **Protect** the information from misuse, interference, loss, unauthorised access, modification or disclosure.

Health and safety

Schools should be mindful that they have obligations towards volunteers in terms of health and safety. In particular, schools have a responsibility to ensure that volunteers are not exposed to risks to their health or safety.³

² *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth).

³ Section 23 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (Vic.)

Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers

In addition to outlining the process for engaging new volunteers for specific volunteer positions and for volunteer work more generally, the Guidelines for Volunteers also contain recommended steps relevant to volunteers currently working at the school (see [Part 14: Existing volunteers](#)).

4. Recruitment of volunteers

It is recommended that schools recruit volunteers on a proactive basis, with the intent of encouraging and broadening volunteer involvement from the local and parish community as well as school families.

Volunteers may be recruited either through:

- an interest in a specific task or job
- a general interest in volunteering which is then matched with a set of mutually agreeable tasks.

Schools use a variety of means to recruit volunteers including information in enrolment packages for new students, seeking expressions of interest in the school newsletter or parish bulletin, and word of mouth. Wherever possible, communications seeking volunteers should demonstrate the school's commitment to safeguarding children. It is recommended that any written communications include a statement as follows:

'This school community promotes the safety, wellbeing and inclusion of all children.'

Any written communications should inform potential volunteers of the child safety practices of the school (including the code of conduct) and of the requirement to hold or be willing to acquire a Working with Children Check.

5. Description of Volunteer Role and Responsibilities of Volunteer Form

The school must ensure that, where volunteers are involved in child-connected work, they prepare a clear statement or description of the role that sets out:

- the role's requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding child safety (e.g. if a volunteer is engaged to accompany students on an excursion, the requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding child safety would include monitoring and supervision of children's lunch);
- the role occupant's essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety (e.g. if a volunteer is engaged for a function, he or she may be required to have gained a Food Handlers Certificate dependent on the preparation and handling of food required).

If there is an existing statement or description of the volunteer role, this should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that it accurately reflects the role in consideration of the ongoing needs of the school. Schools must prepare a Description of Volunteer Role for every volunteer role at the school, including one-off or occasional roles (e.g. school excursion assistant, school fete worker).

Although the school is legally required to prepare such a role description, there is a risk that providing the volunteer with a 'job description' could be an indication that the volunteer is in fact an employee and not a volunteer. For this reason, schools are advised to prepare the Description of Volunteer Role and keep it on file.



Attachment 2: Example
Description of Volunteer Role

The volunteer should receive a simplified version of the Description of Volunteer Role, in the form of a Responsibilities of Volunteer Form. This document should set out the volunteer's responsibilities regarding child safety and any qualifications or accreditations the volunteer must hold or maintain in relation to child safety.

The school should have a general Responsibilities of Volunteer Form but should also be prepared to tailor the form to specific volunteer roles. The form should be provided to the potential volunteer with the application form.



Attachment 3: Example Responsibilities of Volunteer Form

Volunteers should not be engaged to perform roles previously or usually held by paid workers.

6. Application

It is recommended that schools require all potential volunteers (whether they are expressing an interest in general volunteer work at the school or for a specific task/job) to complete a Volunteer Application Form. This is the first stage of the screening process.

For general volunteer work, where potential volunteers have not previously completed the volunteer application and pre-engagement checks, schools should consider asking families who are interested in engaging as a volunteer to complete this form at the start of the school year. This means that ideally the school has the required information and has completed the necessary checks when occasions for volunteering arise during the school year (e.g. accompanying students on an excursion).

It is recommended that schools follow this process for the engagement of volunteers on occasions when a potential volunteer has not been engaged with the school as a volunteer for a period of greater than 12 months.

Provision of the Volunteer Application Form should be accompanied by:

- the school's child safety and wellbeing policy and child safety code of conduct

- the CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety
- the Responsibilities of Volunteer Form.

Child safety and wellbeing policy and child safety code of conduct

Provision of the school's child safety and wellbeing policy and child safety code of conduct complies with the Child Safe Standards in informing potential applicants about the school's child safe practices and emphasising that the school is committed to child safety.⁴ Provision of the CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety emphasises the system-wide importance placed on child safety within Catholic education in Victoria. The template volunteer application form requires potential volunteers to confirm that they have read and understood the school's child safety and wellbeing policy and child safety code of conduct (see [Attachment 4: Template Volunteer Application Form](#)).

Volunteer Application Form

The Volunteer Application Form should request the basic information necessary to screen potential volunteers prior to interview. The Child Safe Standards require schools to sight, verify and record a person's history of work involving children.⁵ For this reason, it is recommended that potential volunteers be required to list their entire work history of work involving children and include any volunteer work involving children.

The Child Safe Standards also require schools to sight, verify and record references that address the person's suitability for the job and working with children. For this reason, the Volunteer Application Form should require the potential volunteer to list at least two referees who are capable of addressing these matters.

So as not to deter potential volunteers, the cover page of the Template Volunteer Application Form contains general information about the importance of child safety which includes an explanation of why the school is required to obtain such detailed background information (see [Attachment 4: Template Volunteer Application Form](#)). The form also explains that prior to volunteering at the school, the person will be asked to meet with the principal (or relevant person on the leadership team) and bring proof of personal identity (and if relevant, copies of qualifications or registration).

⁴ Ministerial Order 1359 requires that: 'When engaging volunteers to undertake child-connected work, volunteers are made aware of the child safety and wellbeing policy and child safety code of conduct of the school'.

⁵ When engaging volunteers to perform child-connected work, Ministerial Order 1359 *requires a school to 'consider the child safety risks relevant to the volunteer's role and, if reasonable and appropriate, collect and record ... (c) The person's history of work involving children ...'*

Potential volunteers should be informed that all volunteers at the school must obtain a Working with Children Check.

Assessing the application

The Volunteer Application Form is a screening tool for the school. The school should thoroughly review the completed form, remembering that child safety is paramount. If the form indicates that the person is unsuitable for volunteering at the school, the person should be politely thanked for their interest and their application declined. If the form does not raise any concerns, the person should proceed to the interview stage.



Attachment 4: Template Volunteer Application Form

7. Interview

In some situations, there may be numerous applications for a particular volunteer position (e.g. a sought-after coaching position). If a school is in this situation, they should consider applying the more rigorous selection process outlined in the *CECV Guidelines for the Employment of Staff in Catholic Schools*, including appointment of a selection panel, shortlisting applicants for interview, more rigorous questioning in the interview and in referee checks and rating of applicants against the selection criteria. However, in most volunteer situations, the process outlined in the *Guidelines for Volunteers* will be sufficient.

All volunteers should be interviewed by the principal (or a relevant person on the leadership team) prior to commencing work at the school. The interview will generally be less formal than an interview for a paid position. Nonetheless, it is important to keep a record of the information obtained in the interview (see [Attachment 4: Template Record of Interview for Volunteers](#)).

Where the interview is for a specific task/job, there should be discussion of the role and responsibilities, using the Description of Volunteer Role and Responsibilities of Volunteer Form as a base. The principal should ask questions with the aim of assessing the suitability of the person for the position. The interview also gives the potential volunteer the opportunity to ask questions about the position and the school generally.

Where a person has indicated an interest in volunteering more generally at the school, it is still important for them to have an interview with the principal. The principal should take the opportunity to ascertain the person's suitability for and interest in the various volunteering opportunities at the school. Again, this is a chance for the potential volunteer to ask questions about various tasks and the school generally.

Child safety

In both situations, the principal should focus on assessing the person's suitability for child-connected work and assess any possible risk to child safety. The principal should inform the person about the school's child safety practices and the school's code of conduct, emphasising the importance of child safety to the school.⁶

Using the Volunteer Application Form as a base for discussion, the principal should verify the applicant's history of work involving children.⁷

It is recommended that the principal ask questions relevant to child safety; for example, in relation to the person's:

- motivation to work with children
- understanding of children's physical and emotional needs
- understanding of professional boundaries
- attitudes to children's rights and how they can be upheld.

During the interview, the principal should take notice of their own intuition when interacting with the person. The principal should ask for further information if the person does not provide sufficient information in his or her responses. Possible warning signs to note during interview include:

- unexplained lengthy gaps in employment history
- the person stating they do not value or 'need' supervision
- the person being evasive or inconsistent in his or her answers
- the person displaying little understanding of why volunteers cannot be 'friends' to children.

⁶ Ministerial Order 1359 requires that: 'When engaging volunteers to undertake child-connected work, volunteers are made aware of the child safety and wellbeing policy and child safety code of conduct of the school'

⁷ When engaging volunteers to perform child-connected work, Ministerial Order 1359 requires a school to 'consider the child safety risks relevant to the volunteer's role and, if reasonable and appropriate, collect and record... (c) The person's history of work involving children ...'

Documentation

As required by the Child Safe Standards, the principal should sight, verify and record the applicant's current Working with Children Check card (See [Part 9: Pre-engagement checks](#)).⁸

Where reasonable and appropriate (taking into account the child safety risks relevant to the volunteer's role), the principal should also collect and record:

- proof of personal identity (e.g. drivers license, passport)
- original copies of applicant's essential or relevant qualifications or registration (if relevant)

Referees

The principal should confirm referee details with the potential volunteer, establishing the person's relationship with their referees. Where possible, the principal should ask to speak with referees who can provide insights into the person's experience involving child-connected work.

Assessing the potential volunteer

The interview is an important screening tool for the school in relation to child safety. If, as a result of the interview, the principal forms the opinion that the person is unsuitable for volunteering at the school, the person should be politely thanked for their interest and their application declined. If the principal is satisfied with the interview, the principal should arrange for referee and other pre-engagement checks (see [Part 8: Referee Checks](#) and [Part 9: Pre-engagement checks](#)).

 **Attachment 5: Template Record of Interview for Volunteers**

8. Referee checks

Referee checks should be conducted for volunteers considered suitable for volunteering at the school. Referee and reference checks are essential to the process of screening potential volunteers, providing additional insight into the volunteer's character and skills. A key focus of referee and reference checks should be addressing the person's suitability for voluntary work and for engaging in child-connected work.⁹

For most schools, reference checking of volunteers is likely to be a new practice. However, it is one that is mandated by the Child Safe Standards (where this is reasonable and appropriate having regard to the child safety risks relevant to the volunteer's role) and so it needs to form part of the school's process in relation to the recruitment of volunteers. It is recommended that the principal contact at least two of the person's nominated referees.

If the reference is provided in writing, the principal should contact the referee to confirm its authenticity. When contacting referees by telephone or otherwise, it is important to verify to whom the principal is speaking to ensure that genuine contact details have been provided.

When speaking with referees, the principal should seek to establish and/or verify the referee's relationship with the potential volunteer and assess the person's suitability for engaging in volunteer work at the school. It is particularly important to verify the person's history of work involving children.¹⁰

Useful questions to ask a referee include the following:

- How long have you known the person?
- What is the nature of your relationship with the person?
- Have you previously worked with the person in either an employment or voluntary setting?
- Are you aware whether the person has previously worked with children in an employment or voluntary setting?
- Would you consider the person to be suitable for volunteering at the school in the following capacity [insert details of position or general volunteering tasks]?
- Have you directly observed the person working with children?
- Are you comfortable knowing the person might be working directly with children?

The principal should ask for further information if the referee does not provide sufficient information in his or her responses. It is recommended that

⁸ When engaging volunteers to perform child-connected work, Ministerial Order 1359 *requires a school to sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance (if the person is required to have a clearance in accordance with the Worker Screening Act 2020) or any equivalent background check and consider the child safety risks relevant to the volunteer's role and, if reasonable and appropriate, collect and record:*

(a) *Proof of personal identity and information about any essential or relevant professional or other qualifications ...'*

⁹ When engaging volunteers to perform child-connected work, Ministerial Order 1359 *requires a school to...consider the child*

safety risks relevant to the volunteer's role and, if reasonable and appropriate, collect and record ... (d) References that address the person's suitability for the job and working with children.'

¹⁰ When engaging volunteers to perform child-connected work, Ministerial Order 1359 *requires a school to ... consider the child safety risks relevant to the volunteer's role and, if reasonable and appropriate, collect and record ... (c) The person's history of work involving children ...'*

the principal take note of any pauses or gaps in a referee's responses. The principal should not be afraid to 'probe' if they consider the referee has concerns about the person or is not telling the full story.

The principal should keep a written record of the referee's responses (see [Attachment 4: Template Referee Report for Volunteers](#)).

Assessing the potential volunteer

The referee check is another important screening tool for the school in relation to child safety. If, as a result of a discussion with a referee, the principal forms the opinion that the person is unsuitable for volunteering at the school, the person should be politely thanked for their interest and their application declined. If the principal is satisfied with the referee checks, the principal should conduct the remaining pre-engagement checks.



Attachment 6: Template Referee Report for Volunteers

9. Pre-engagement checks

It is important that schools conduct pre-engagement checks prior to the volunteer commencing work at the school. The key check is a Working with Children Check (WWCC). For some positions, a National Police Record Check (Police Check) may also be relevant. If the potential volunteer does not pass a WWCC or does not produce a satisfactory result from the Police Check (if required) their application for voluntary work at the school should be declined.

Principals must be mindful that such checks are only one part of building a child-safe organisation. WWCCs and Police Checks do not assess a person's suitability to work with or care for children in a particular role. It is the responsibility of the principal to assess whether a person is suitable to engage in child-connected work and to monitor their behaviour around children. Pre-engagement checks should be combined with other strategies, such as those outlined in these Guidelines for Volunteers, for selecting and engaging suitable people to volunteer in schools.

Working with Children Check

The *Worker Screening Act 2020* (Vic.) requires that any person doing child-related work, and who is not exempt, must have a valid WWCC. A WWCC helps protect children from physical and sexual harm. It does this by screening a person's criminal records and professional conduct records, and preventing people who pose an unjustifiable risk to children from working with or caring for children.

All school volunteers, including school parents, must be required to apply for and pass a WWCC. If the volunteer does not already have a current WWCC, they must obtain this prior to commencing volunteering at the school and present the WWCC card to the school as soon as practicable.

WWCC cards are valid for five years. Schools need to ensure that they have processes in place for regular checking of WWCCs.

National Police Record Check

A Police Check is different to a WWCC. A WWCC considers 'relevant offences' as listed in the *Working with Children Act 2005* (Vic.), such as sexual, violent and drug offences. A Police Check is a list, at any given point in time, of the offences a person has committed.

The principal needs to decide whether a particular volunteering position requires the volunteer to undergo a Police Check. For example, a principal may decide that a Police Check is required for a role in which the volunteer:

- has access to money or expensive goods because it will report on fraud and theft offences
- is required to drive a vehicle carrying students because it will report on drink-driving offences.

For most positions, a Police Check will not add any additional information relevant to child safety and therefore a WWCC will be satisfactory. While child safety is the paramount consideration, principals should also consider whether a Police Check would unnecessarily exclude some parents or other volunteers, or is likely to be viewed as invasive in the circumstances.

If a Police Check is required, the volunteer should be required to provide the resulting National Police Certificate to the school as soon as practicable. The school should ensure they sight the original National Police Certificate and retain a photocopy of such. National Police Certificates do not have an expiry date. The National Police Certificate is the result of a check of police records only up until the day it is issued. Unlike a WWCC, there is no ongoing monitoring. It is recommended that schools require volunteers to undergo a Police Check every five years (consistent with the timeframe for the WWCC).

Assessing the potential volunteer

If the potential volunteer does not pass the WWCC or does not produce a satisfactory result from the Police Check (if relevant) the person should be politely thanked for their interest and their application declined. If the principal is satisfied with the pre-engagement checks, the principal should confirm the engagement in writing.

Engagement of Volunteers

10. Confirmation of engagement

If the principal is satisfied that the person is suitable for volunteer work at the school, they should confirm the engagement in writing. The letter (hard copy or email) should either confirm details of the specific task/job or confirm that the school would welcome the volunteer for general volunteering opportunities as they arise.

The letter should attach:

- the school's child-safe policy and code of conduct
- the CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety
- the Responsibilities of Volunteer Form.



Attachment 7: Template Letter Confirming Volunteer Work

11. Induction

Induction is a structured and supportive method of introducing a new volunteer to a school. The transition to a new workplace is made easier and more effective for both the individual and the school if there is a comprehensive induction process in place, aimed at introducing the new volunteer to the workplace.

An induction process should communicate the school's ethos, policies and procedures to new volunteers and include an introduction to their role and their immediate work area. It is also a means by which information and resources are provided to a new volunteer in a timely manner.

Induction is an ideal opportunity to have discussions with new volunteers about child safety. In accordance with the Child Safety Standards, schools need to ensure that volunteers who will be engaged in child-connected work receive an induction regarding child safety and wellbeing that is appropriate to the nature of the role, and which includes:

- information on the school's child safety code of conduct
- where relevant to the role, the child safety and wellbeing policy and the procedures for managing complaints and concerns related to child abuse.¹¹

Volunteers must also be made aware of their responsibilities to children and students, information sharing and reporting obligations and record keeping obligations. Volunteers should also be provided with a copy of:

- the school's child safety and wellbeing policy the school's child safety code of conduct
- information on other relevant practices and procedures.

It is important that the discussion about child safety includes practical matters. For example, volunteers should be advised that they should not work alone with children, that they should not have unnecessary physical contact with children and that they should avoid having 'favourites' among students. Volunteers should be given an opportunity to ask questions about relevant policies, procedures and practices. It is important that volunteers know who to contact if they have concerns.

Volunteers should also be provided with relevant information relating to health and safety.



Attachment 8: Template Volunteer Induction Checklist

Post first week

Beyond the initial induction, it is important to keep communication flowing and to address any concerns. Particularly for ongoing or recurring volunteer work, the principal or delegated staff members, as relevant, should regularly 'touch base' with the volunteer.

12. Ongoing obligations regarding child safety

Ongoing support, supervision and training of volunteers is critical in managing and reducing risks to child safety. The Child Safe Standards impose ongoing obligations on schools in relation to volunteers.¹²

Specifically, schools must ensure that volunteers are:

- provided with ongoing supervision and people management that focuses on child safety and wellbeing
- supported to implement the child safety and wellbeing policy of the school to the extent that it is applicable to their role and responsibilities..

¹¹ Ministerial Order 1359 requires that: *'volunteers engaged in child-connected work receive an induction regarding child safety and wellbeing that is appropriate to the nature of the role, and which includes (i) information on the child safety code of conduct; and (ii) where relevant to the role, the child safety and wellbeing policy and the procedures for managing complaints and concerns related to child abuse'*

¹² Ministerial Order 1359 requires that: *'ongoing supervision and people management of staff and volunteers focuses on child safety and wellbeing.'*

Training

As a basic starting point, volunteers should be able to easily access and understand the school's commitment to child safety and wellbeing and relevant policies. Schools are obliged to ensure that volunteers engaged in child-connected work receive training and information that will equip them with the knowledge, skills and awareness required to keep children and students safe and that is appropriate to the nature and responsibilities of their role. It is recommended that volunteers in ongoing/recurring positions receive training relevant to child safety each year. Such training can take many forms including:

- Training by external organisations
- Training developed and delivered internally
- On-the-job training, mentoring and coaching.

When determining the type of training and information to provide to volunteers, consideration must be given to whether or not it is reasonable and necessary to include training and information on:

- the child safety and wellbeing policy of the school
- the child safety code of conduct of the school
- how to recognise indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students
- how to respond effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and support colleagues who disclose harm
- how they can contribute to building culturally safe environments for children and students
- any obligations they have relating to information sharing and recordkeeping
- how to identify and manage child safety risks relevant to their role, without compromising a child or student's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.

Support, supervision and monitoring

Volunteers should always be supervised when working with or around children. Schools should pay particular attention to new volunteers to ensure they understand their role and to check that their behaviour towards children is appropriate.

In addition, schools are advised to:

- provide clear expectations about roles and responsibilities and give volunteers the best support and training to equip them to perform their roles;
- ensure that volunteers have regular opportunities to meet and talk with their relevant coordinators/managers/the principal;

in this way, volunteers are more likely to share observations or talk about concerns that may otherwise go unsaid;

- ensure that all staff who supervise volunteers have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and protocols for volunteers.

13. Record keeping

Schools should maintain accurate volunteer management records. The following information should be recorded:

- personal details for the volunteer including full name, address, date of birth and emergency contact information (this information should be kept in an accessible place and separate from other confidential information in relation to the volunteer)
- selection/screening process documentation
- copy of WWCC card
- National Police Certificate (if relevant) Responsibilities of Volunteer Form
- record for each day on which the volunteer is participating at the site (the date and hours of participation)
- rolls kept of the students working with the volunteer
- names of staff members to whom the volunteer reports
- dates and details of any concerns raised by others about the volunteer and action taken attendance and training records.

Schools should retain all documents relevant to the screening and selection process, including any unsuccessful applications for volunteer work, for at least seven years after the selection process has concluded. Schools need to ensure that they comply with Public Record Office Victoria Standards (including in relation to minimum retention periods), privacy legislation and any relevant policies in relation to the storage and use of personal records.

14. Existing volunteers

The processes outlined in the Guidelines for Volunteers are primarily designed for:

- people expressing an interest in a particular volunteer task/job at the school
- people expressing an interest in volunteering generally at the school (process to be completed each year).

Many schools will have existing volunteers, who work on a yearly basis. In order to comply with the

Child Safe Standards and ensure child safety, it is recommended that the principal:

- ensure there is a satisfactory description of the role in place for each volunteer position, and provide each volunteer with a Responsibilities of a Volunteer Form (see [Part 5: Description of the volunteer role](#))
- request that the volunteer complete the volunteer application form for school records (see [Part 6: Application](#))
- ensure the volunteer has a WWCC (see [Part 9: Pre-engagement checks](#))
- ensure the volunteer is provided with training and support in accordance with the requirements set out in these guidelines
- ensure the volunteer has passed a Police Check (see [Part 9: Pre-engagement checks](#)) if relevant meet with the volunteer for a general discussion about child safety (consider using the interview questions in [Part 7: Interview as a guide](#)) provide the volunteer with a copy of the school's child-safety policy, code of conduct and the CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety.

15. Further information

Contact

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Catholic Education Melbourne
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Catholic Education Office Sale
6 Witton Street
Warragul VIC 3820
www.ceosale.catholic.edu.au

Catholic Education Office Sandhurst
120 Hargreaves Street
Bendigo VIC 3552
www.ceosand.catholic.edu.au

Victorian Registration and Qualifications
Authority
Level 4, Casselden
2 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
www.vrqa.vic.gov.au

Additional resources

[Ministerial Order No. 1359](#) – Child safety Standards
– Managing the risk of child abuse in schools

[CECV Statement of Commitment to Child Safety](#)

[CECV Guidelines on the Employment of Staff in Catholic Schools](#)

[CECV Guidelines on the Engagement of Contractors in Catholic Schools](#)

Attachments

[Attachment 1](#): Checklist for the Engagement of Volunteers in Catholic Schools

[Attachment 2](#): Example Description of Volunteer Role

[Attachment 3](#): Example Responsibilities of Volunteer Form

[Attachment 4](#): Template Volunteer Application Form

[Attachment 5](#): Template Record of Interview for Volunteers

[Attachment 6](#): Example Referee Report for Volunteers

[Attachment 7](#): Template Letter Confirming Volunteer Work

[Attachment 8](#): Template Volunteer Induction Checklist