



ELTHAM HIGH SCHOOL

POLICY DOCUMENT *Volunteers*



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact Eltham High School.

INTRODUCTION

This policy outlines the processes that Eltham High School will follow to recruit, screen, supervise and manage volunteers to provide a child safe environment, and to explain the legal rights of volunteers.

PHILOSOPHY

Eltham High School 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 Eltham High School's volunteers are suitable to work with children and are well-placed to make a positive contribution to our school community.

POLICY STATEMENT

Eltham High School is committed to implementing and following practices which protect the safety and wellbeing of children and our staff and volunteers.

This policy applies to the recruitment, screening, supervision and management of all people who volunteer at our school.

GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY

Volunteer Opportunities at Eltham High School

Members of the school community are encouraged to engage in the school through a range of volunteer opportunities. These opportunities include, but are not limited to;

- Friends of Music
- Friends of Drama
- School Council and associated committees including Planning and Policy Review and Finance
- Grounds Committee
- Canteen

Opportunities will be communicated through the school newsletter and Compass Newsfeed.

Becoming a volunteer

Members of our school community who would like to volunteer are encouraged to contact the General Office or respond directly to a specific advertised request.

Child-connected work: work authorised by the school governing authority/provider of a school boarding services and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child-related work: As defined by the Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic), child-related work is 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 direct 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 (ie indemnified) from action by others in the event of an injury or accident whilst they are performing volunteer school work in good faith.

Suitability checks including Working with Children Clearances

The Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic) only sets out the minimum requirements for WWC Checks and Clearances.

The Child Safe Standards are another law relevant to schools that requires appropriate screening measures/suitability checks to be undertaken in relation to volunteers and visitors. To ensure compliance with both pieces of legislation and Department policy, schools may choose to go above the minimum requirements under the Worker Screening Act, depending on the nature and risk of the activities the volunteer will be engaged in.

Working with students

Eltham High School values the many volunteers that assist with the school in a myriad of ways. To ensure that we are meeting our legal obligations under the *Working With Children Act 2005* (Vic) and the Child Safe Standards, Eltham High School 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, qualification and work history involving children checks.

'Where prospective volunteers are required under the law and this policy to have a WWC Clearance, the principal has the discretion to accept evidence of a WWC check application in order to commence volunteer work, provided the volunteer provides the school with evidence of the application outcome (clearance or exclusion) as soon as practicable after the applicant receives it.'

Considering our legal obligations, and our commitment to ensuring that Eltham High School is a child safe environment, we will require volunteers that involve direct work with a child (face to face or online) to obtain a WWC Check and produce their valid card to the General Office. The Registrar keeps a record of all WWC Checks for verification in the following circumstances:

- **Volunteers who are not parent/family members of any student** at the school 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, camps and similar events, regardless of whether their own child is participating or not.

In situations where the contact with a child is indirect and occasional or incidental to the work performed, it is the responsibility of the principal to determine if a Working with Children Clearance is required, considering the child safety risks relevant to the person's role.

- **Parent/family volunteers** who regularly assist in school activities, regardless of whether their own child is participating or not. This includes working bees, committees of school council and other events. While children may not always be in attendance, there are occasions where children are in attendance at such events.
- **Parent/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

At law, volunteers who are not engaged in child-related work do not need a WWC Check under the WWC Act. However, the Child Safe Standards require appropriate suitability checks (at the discretion of the school) for any **child-connected** work which is work performed where children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

On some occasions, parents and other members of the school community may volunteer to do work that is not child-related. 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.

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 code of conduct referred to in our Child Safety Induction Pack and ensure the actions and requirements in these documents are followed when volunteering for our school.

Depending on the nature and responsibilities of their role, Eltham High 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 and Wellbeing 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 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 Eltham High 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 in accordance with the Schools' Privacy Policy and the Department's policy on Privacy and Information Sharing.

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. For further information on child safety responding and reporting obligations refer to: Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures.

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 Business Manager to ensure they are managed in accordance with the Department's policy: Records Management – Schools.

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:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in induction processes for relevant staff
- Included as a link in all invitations to prospective volunteers
- Discussed in an annual staff briefing/meeting

- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request

BASIS OF DISCRETION

The School Council has responsibility for the establishment, evaluation and review of school policies. The School Principal has the responsibility to ensure that school policies are implemented effectively.

Minor changes to the policy (changes that will not affect the spirit of the policy) may be made at the discretion of the Principal.

The Policy Review and Evaluation process will recommend any major changes to the policy to School Council.

RELATED POLICIES

Eltham High School policies and resources relevant to this policy include the following and can be found at <https://www.elthamhs.vic.edu.au/policies-child-safety/> :

- Statement of Values and School Philosophy,
- Visitors Policy, Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy,
- Child Safety Code of Conduct,
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures,
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Child Safety Induction Pack

Department policies:

- [Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination](#)
- [Child Safe Standards](#)
- [Privacy and Information Sharing](#)
- [Records Management – School Records](#)
- [Sexual Harassment](#)
- [Volunteers in Schools](#)
- [Volunteer OHS Management](#)
- [Working with Children and Other Suitability Checks for School Volunteers and Visitors](#)
- [Workplace Bullying](#)

REVIEW

This policy should be reviewed every 2 years.

Date Endorsed: 19/06/24

Executive Officer

Eltham High School Council

CONSULTATION PROCESS AND WORKING PARTY INFORMATION:

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	19/06/24
Consultation	P&PR team
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	06/26

PROCESS FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW

The Policy is developed or reviewed by the Policy Writer or Policy Writing Team using the agreed "Policy Template"

The policy is presented to the Planning and Policy Review Team

Relevant groups are consulted in relation to the policy by the Policy Writer / Policy Writing Team

Feedback is addresses by the Policy Writer /Policy Writing Team

The policy is re-presented to the Planning and Policy Review Team

Approved

The policy is presented to the School Council for endorsement

The policy is endorsed by the School Council

Further Clarification

Additional Feedback

Re-presented

