

Working with Children and other Suitability Checks for School Volunteers and Visitors

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Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure schools understand requirements for suitability checks including Working with Children Checks for volunteers and visitors who work with children at Victorian government schools.

Summary

- Working with Children Checks are required by law only for people who engage in child-related work.
- Schools may also choose to require suitability checks (including Working with Children Checks) for visitors and volunteers engaging in child-connected work.
- Schools must make reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record information about a person who they are proposing to engage in child-related work and child-connected work.

Details

Schools and school councils must:

- follow laws that require a Working With Children Check (WWC Check) for adults undertaking child-related work in a school
- adhere to Department policies regarding suitability checks for employees, visitors and volunteers
- establish and implement school-level policies and procedures to assess and verify the suitability of adults who engage in child-connected work through their Visitors in Schools policy and Volunteers in Schools policy

Templates are available for schools

A school-level [Visitor Policy Template](#) and [Volunteer Policy Template](#) are available on the [School Policy Templates Portal](#) (login required). Schools can modify the templates to suit their local circumstances.

WWC Checks are required

WWC Checks are required by law, under the [Working with Children Act 2005 \(Vic\)](#), only for people who engage in child-related work, unless an exemption applies (see exemptions below).

An activity may be ‘child-related work’ regardless of whether the contact with a child is supervised by another person or not. This means even if a volunteer or visitor is supervised by a teacher, they must still have (and provide evidence of) a WWC Check if they are doing ‘child-related work’.

Child-related work:

- involves an adult working with children in paid and unpaid work
- having direct contact with children, including physical, face-to-face, written, verbal, online or phone contact, and
- the contact is a usual part of the person’s duties and is not occasional or incidental to their work

When a WWC Check is not legally required

A WWC Check is not legally required if the person:

- qualifies for an exemption (for example, Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registered teacher, police officer, parent whose child is participating or normally participates in the activity, or a person working with a child who is closely related to them)
- is supervising a student in practical training organised by their educational institution
- takes part in an activity with a child in the same way that a child participates for example, as other players in a chess or rowing team

School may increase requirements

The law only sets out the minimum requirements for who must have a WWC Check. Schools can require, as school policy, that people who will be attending the school as visitors, volunteers or contractors have a WWC Check.

For more guidance on when a WWC Check is legally required, visit [Working with Children Check](#).

For information on suitability checks for employees, refer to: [Recruitment in Schools](#).

Child-connected work

Child-connected work is the term used in Ministerial Order 870 — Child Safe Standards. It is defined as work:

- authorised by the principal, school council or Department
- performed by an adult in a school environment, including online, school camps and excursions, and
- when children are present or reasonably expected to be present

For child-connected work, it is up to each school to determine whether they will require WWC Checks for visitors and volunteers based on the nature of the person's interaction with children.

Each school is unique and what checks are required should reflect the risks of each individual school setting, the school community and what duties the person will be performing.

Schools are encouraged to develop their own specific policies and practices, keeping in mind the broad intent of the [Child Safe Standards](#) to embed a child safe culture that has zero tolerance for child abuse.

Templates for school-level visitors policies and volunteer policies are available on the [School Policy Templates Portal](#) (login required). Schools can modify the templates to suit their local circumstances.

Deciding if it is child-related versus child-connected work

To assist in deciding what suitability checks may be appropriate for a person (volunteer, visitor or contractor) doing child-related versus child-connected work see:

- [Suitability Check Flowchart for Schools \(PDF\)](#)
- [Suitability Check Flowchart for Schools \(Word\)](#)

Suitability requirements for both child-related and child-connected work apply to adult volunteers and visitors to the school, including contractors.

What schools must do to assess suitability

In assessing what suitability checks should be made, schools must consider what, if any, level of risk is acceptable or reasonable in the circumstances and adopt appropriate risk mitigation strategies. Factors and strategies to consider may include:

- how much time the person spends on school premises to perform their work while children are present
- whether the individual will be able to move freely around the school without staff members accompanying them or in close proximity to staff members
- adding a clause in contractor service agreements about the need to comply with the Child Safe Standards
- taking reasonable precautions to supervise visitors and volunteers, including their contact with children, where this is considered necessary

The below information identifies scenarios where suitability checks may be useful or required.

Child-related work

Examples of child-related work include the following activities or positions.

Activities

- attendant care
- school camps
- excursions (including swimming)

- literacy and numeracy support
- homework clubs, breakfast lunch clubs and other student support activities
- distance education

Positions

- classroom or library assistant
- sporting or musical and other extracurricular coaches
- canteen and uniform shop assistant
- allied health or NDIS therapists
- Department staff who are working with children
- Special Religious Instruction instructors

Suitability check requirements

WWC Check required. Other suitability checks may be required including:

- proof of personal identity
- proof of professional qualifications
- history of working with children
- reference checks

Note: Parents are legally exempt from the requirement to hold a WWC check when volunteering in an activity in which their child normally participates. In this instance requiring a WWC Check is at the discretion of the school - but is recommended where the parent is regularly involved in the volunteer activity and working directly with children, and/or the nature of the activity poses a higher risk, e.g. overnight camps, swimming or activities involving close contact, etc.

Child-connected work

Examples of child-connected work include the following activities or positions.

Activities

- fete or fundraising activities
- working bee assistance (outside school hours)
- parents' and friends' clubs

Positions

External tradespeople, for example, gardening, building and grounds maintenance.

Suitability check requirements

School-level decision as to what suitability checks are required but a WWC Check is recommended where the visitor or volunteer will regularly be present at the school or children can reasonably be expected to be present.

Information gathering to assess suitability

Schools must make reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record information about a person who they are proposing to engage in child-connected work. This may include:

- confirming identity for example, drivers licence or other photo identification
- WWC Check
- VIT teacher registration
- confirming professional qualifications
- National Police Record Check
- personal references that address the person's suitability for the job and working with children

Definitions

Child-related work

- involves an adult working with children under 18 years old (both paid and unpaid work)
- having direct contact with children (physical, face-to-face, written, oral or electronic contact) and
- is a usual part of the person's duties (and is not occasional or incidental to their work)

Child-connected work

- is work authorised by the principal, school council or Department
- performed by an adult in a school environment (including online and school camps) and
- when children are present or reasonably expected to be present

Related policies

- [Child Safe Standards](#)
- [Reportable Conduct Scheme](#)
- [Visitors in Schools](#)
- [Volunteers in Schools](#)

Relevant legislation

- [Education and Training Reform Act 2006 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Ministerial Order 870](#)
- [Working with Children Act 2005 \(Vic\)](#)

Guidance

There is no further guidance for this topic. For more inform...

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