



Volunteers Policy

PURPOSE

To outline the processes that Mountain Gate 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.

SCOPE

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

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, 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.

Mountain Gate Primary School volunteers includes (but are not limited to):

- Members of the school Council and PTFA
- Relatives of pupils
- University students
- Previous members of staff
- Local residents and members of local community groups
- Members of the local community
- Secondary school students

School work: School work includes (but is not limited to):

- 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 the school
- 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.



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The types of activities that volunteers are engaged in might include:

- Working with children in classrooms and in group activities after training through the school's Parent Helpers program
- Coaching sporting teams
- Accompanying school visits, excursions and camps
- Working Bees
- Working in school gardens and vegetable patch
- Guest speaker/expert helper
- Assisting with extra curricula and non-curriculum based activities such as Father's or Mother's Day stalls, school events, BBQs etc

POLICY

Mountain Gate Primary School is committed to implementing and following practices which protect the safety and wellbeing of children and our staff and volunteers.

- Mountain Gate Primary School recognises the valuable contribution that volunteers provide to our school community and the work that we do.
- Volunteers at our school bring with them a range of skills and experience that can enhance the learning opportunities of children. We welcome and encourage volunteers from the local community.

The procedures set out below are designed to ensure that Mountain Gate Primary 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

Members of our school community who would like to volunteer are encouraged to contact the Principal, Assistant Principal or approach their class teacher.

The school may ask for volunteers when undertaking certain activities and will notify the community via newsletter, email or notes home.

- Volunteers who want to assist in classroom activities eg, reading must complete the Mountain Gate Primary school Parent Helpers Program which is held annually in February.
- Volunteers in school are bound by confidentiality. Whilst in school volunteers may hear conversations which are of a confidential nature. These cover aspects such as children's academic progress, behaviour, or home circumstances. All information relating to individual children and staff is totally confidential and volunteers must respect this
- Any concerns that volunteers have about the children they work with/ come into contact with must be shared with the class teacher and not with the parents of the child or any persons outside school. (This is to alleviate misinformation and distress.)
- All volunteers work under the supervision of the class teacher to which they are assigned or to a responsible person in charge of an outside curriculum event such as the Principal, Event Coordinator, etc



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Commitment to Child Safety

At Mountain Gate Primary School we are committed to Child Safety. All volunteers are required to familiarise themselves with and adhere to our school Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct. These are available on the school website and at the school office.

If a child discloses something, this information must be shared promptly with the Principal or Assistant Principal. We cannot offer unconditional confidentiality when a child discloses something; however, reassurance can be given that the best interests of the child will be maintained. If you have concerns about a child's safety, please consult with the school Principal or Assistant Principal.

Volunteers who are concerned about anything another adult in the school does or says should raise the matter with the Principal or Assistant Principal.

Suitability checks including Working with Children Checks

To ensure that we are meeting our legal obligations under the *Working With Children Act 2005* (Vic) and the Child Safe Standards, Mountain Gate Primary School is required to undertake suitability checks which may include a Working With Children Check, proof of identity, work history involving children and/or reference checks.

All volunteers (for all activities) at Mountain Gate Primary School are required to have a Working with Children Check (WWC Check) to provide evidence of their suitability

- **Volunteers who are not parent/family members** of any student at the school are required to have a WWC Check 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 (including swimming), camps and similar events, regardless of whether their own child is participating or not.
- **Parent/family volunteers** who regularly assist in school activities, regardless of whether their own child is participating or not
- **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



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We will require volunteers to obtain a WWC Check and produce their valid card to the Office to Business Manager/Principal for verification.

A copy of the WWC will be kept at the School Office.

- 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.
- If a volunteer or staff members occupation exempts them from the requirement to have a Working with Children Check (e.g. police officers, teachers) they must provide evidence to support their claim to an exemption.
- All volunteers must sign in at the office prior to commencing any work at the school.

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, volunteering on the weekend for gardening, maintenance, working bees, parents and friends club coordination, school council, participating in sub-committees of school council, fete coordination, 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 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. *However, Mountain Gate Primary School reserves the right to undertake suitability checks, including proof of identity, Working with Children Checks, at its discretion if considered necessary for any particular activities or circumstances.* egCheck/proof of ID/references/work history].

Management and supervision

- Volunteer workers will be expected to comply with any reasonable direction of the principal (or their nominee).
- Volunteers will be required to follow our school's policies, including, but not limited to our [Child Safety Policy / Statement of Commitment to Child Safety], our Child Safety Code of Conduct, Statement of Values and School Philosophy] and relevant OH &S policies.



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- 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 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 Mountain Gate Primary School.
- Mountain Gate Primary School will provide any appropriate induction and/or training for all volunteer workers. The principal (or their nominee) will determine what induction and/or training is necessary depending on what type of work the volunteer will be engaged in.
- All volunteers will be provided induction in relation to Mountain Gate Primary School's child safety practices, including reporting obligations and procedures. Our school has a Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy which all staff and volunteers should be aware of.

Health and Safety

The school has Emergency Procedures, details are found in all classrooms, and on buildings within the school. Class teachers should ensure that volunteers are clear about emergency procedures (e.g. fire evacuation) and about any safety aspects associated with a particular task (e.g. using cookery equipment). If a volunteer attends a school trip, their emergency contact details will be requested.

Volunteers need to exercise due care and attention and report any obvious hazards or concerns to the class teacher, Assistant Principal or Principal.

Complaints Procedure

Any complaints made about a volunteer or by a volunteer will be referred to the Principal or Assistant Principal for investigation.

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.



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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.

RELATED POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Statement of Values, Visitors Policy, Statement of Commitment to Child Safety/Child Safe Policy, Child Safety Code of Conduct

This policy was last reviewed in September 2018 and scheduled for review in September 2021