

# WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK POLICY AND PROCEDURES



## 1. POLICY STATEMENT

Clarinda Primary School is responsible for protecting children and young people from abuse and ensuring their safety and wellbeing in accordance with the Victorian Government's PROTECT Child Safe Standards.

The Child Safe Standards are a compulsory minimum requirement for all Victorian schools, ensuring school awareness of Ministerial Order No 870 and its implication for **Standard 4**, among other objectives: **school staff selection, and supervision and management practices for a child-safe environment.**

The intent of this standard is for organisations to “ensure that recruitment processes are in place to manage and reduce the risk of child abuse. In addition, processes must be in place to ensure that there are appropriate staff induction programs, staff professional development and staff supervision arrangements to ensure a child safe environment.”<sup>1</sup>

## 2. POLICY PURPOSE

1. To minimise risk of harm to students by ensuring school leaders and the community are aware of the Child Safety Standards, which involves requiring school staff to provide evidence that they have appropriate approvals to work with children in accordance with legislation, clause 10 of Ministerial Order No 870, and Department of Education and Training policy.
2. The school must make reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record the following information about **school staff**<sup>2</sup> it proposes to engage to perform **child-connected work**<sup>3</sup>:
  - Working with Children Check status (WCC), or similar check;
  - proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications;
  - the person's history of work involving children; and
  - references that address the person's suitability for the job and working with children.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe/Pages/standards.html>

<sup>2</sup> In a Government school, an individual working in a school environment who is:

- employed under Part 2.4 of the ETR Act in the government teaching service; or
- employed under a contract of service by the council of the school under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act; or
- a **volunteer or a contracted service provider** (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary).

<sup>3</sup> Work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

### 3. IMPLEMENTATION

Clarinda Primary School will assess and verify the suitability of school staff (defined above as teachers, contractors or volunteers) who will work with children. Unless an exemption applies to a person, a valid Working with Children Check (WCC) is the minimum standard for all adults working with children. If a volunteer's occupation exempts them from the requirement to have a WCC e.g. police officers, teachers, they must provide evidence to support their claim to an exemption, per the **Policy Purpose** section.

It is the responsibility of the principal to ensure that only suitable and eligible persons are employed in the school. Prior to employing a person, the principal must be satisfied that the person meets the required Suitability for Employment Checks. See **Suitability for Employment Policy**: [http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/Suitability\\_for\\_employment.pdf](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/Suitability_for_employment.pdf)

In addition to a WCC, Clarinda Primary School staff and volunteers may also require a criminal record check. This may be considered necessary when certain offences are relevant to the duties of the volunteer or staff member, for example checking for dishonesty offences may be required for a role that involves managing finances or petty cash.

To maintain high standards of conduct and professionalism in our school, Clarinda Primary School will ensure that the Department's procedures for criminal record checks are implemented. <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/employcond/Pages/crimcheck.aspx>

Clarinda Primary School will adhere to the Department procedures for the conduct of criminal records checks for all school based employees, including arrangements that allow for the acceptance of the criminal records check conducted by the Victorian Institute of Teaching and WCCs to meet the Department's pre-employment suitability for employment requirements.

#### 3.1 Volunteers

##### 3.1.1 Definition

The Working with Children Check (WCC) assists in protecting children from sexual or physical harm by ensuring that people who work with, or care for, them are subject to a screening process.<sup>4</sup>

For Government schools, as defined by Ministerial Order No 870, the definition of school staff includes **volunteers**. WCCs are required by all volunteers who will be working with students for school activities whether or not supervised by a teacher and whether or not the activity is on school grounds or during school hours.

For example, a volunteer who is assisting at a school camp, swimming, sports carnival, school concert or any other approved school activity outside of school grounds will require a WCC. **Exemptions** are listed at section 3.5.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/home/about+the+check/index.html>

### 3.1.2 Commencing volunteering – Interim approval to engage in child-connected work

The school must make reasonable efforts to gather, verify and record information about volunteers it proposes to engage for child-connected activities. As an interim measure a volunteer can commence work in Clarinda Primary School when they:

- provide the Business Manager or suitable front-office staff a receipt as proof they have applied for a WCC with the Department of Justice, AND
- receive formal written approval of the Principal or Assistant Principal as being considered suitable for interim volunteer work in the absence of a formal WCC.

**NB** – An interim approval expires 30 days following the date of formal approval provided by the Principal or Assistant Principal. All volunteers with interim approval **must** supply the school with evidence of their WCC status during or immediately prior to the expiration of the 30 day interim approval period. A volunteer who is required to provide a WCC or equivalent to the school and cannot produce this material within a reasonable period (30 days from receipt of formal interim approval) will no longer be considered suitable by the school for child-connected work until relevant proof of WCC status is provided.

### **3.2 Working with Children Check**

The WCC is a minimum checking standard set by the *Working with Children Act 2005* for those who work with children, either on a paid or voluntary basis. It checks for serious sexual, violent and drug-related offences as well as disciplinary findings of professional agencies such as the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

To be a volunteer at Clarinda Primary School a valid Working with Children Card provided by the Department of Justice is required. This card is:

- valid for 5 years
- transferable between volunteer organisations
- free of charge for volunteers, but cannot be used for paid employment.

**NB** - WCCs for paid employment can be used to show suitability for volunteer work.

#### Applying for a Working with Children Check

Volunteers interested in working with the school to engage in child-connected work should apply for a WCC online at the following address: <http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/home/>

- The Customer Support line for Working with Children Check Unit can be contacted on 1300 652 879 (local call charge). The Customer Support Line operates from 8.30am to 5pm weekdays (excluding public holidays).
- Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS): Call TIS on 13 14 50 and ask them to call the Working with Children Check Customer Support Line
- Service for those with speech, hearing impairment or deafness (TTY): Connect to the National Relay Service (NIR) to find the service that meets your needs. Or, call 133 677 for TTY/voice calls or 1300 555 727 for 'speak and listen'.

### **3.3 Gather, verify and maintain records & selection, supervision and management practices**

A copy of the school staff's WCC will be kept on the file at the school.

Clarinda Primary School will implement procedures to ensure staff members and volunteers hold a valid WCC card; at a minimum annually at the commencement of the school year.

It is the responsibility of school staff to:

- provide Clarinda Primary School with the successful WCC card prior to commencement
- notify the Principal or Assistant Principal if there has been a relevant change in circumstances, for example, if they have been charged or found guilty of a new relevant offence by Victoria Police or any other law enforcement or regulatory agency, or if the school staffer's WCC has been suspended, and
- apply for a new WCC before their card expires.

It is Clarinda Primary School's responsibility to take reasonable steps to gather, verify and maintain the records demonstrating suitability of school staff for child-connected work. It is also the school's responsibility to ensure appropriate supervision and support arrangements are in place to:

- induct new school staff into the school's policies, codes, practices and procedures governing child safety and child-connected work, and
- monitor and assess a job occupant's (including a volunteer's) suitability for child-connected work.

### **3.4 Privacy**

Clarinda Primary School will apply privacy principles when collecting, using, retaining or disposing of personal or health information in accordance with the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (Vic) and the *Health Records Act 2001* (Vic).

### **3.5 Exemptions**

The Working with Children Act identifies categories of individuals who are exempted from the requirement to have a WCC. Clarinda Primary School reserves the right to nevertheless require a WCC if the Principal considers it necessary in the circumstances. The exempt categories are:

#### 3.5.1 Teachers

Registered teachers or teachers who have permission to teach from the Victorian Institute of Teaching under Part 2.6 of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* are exempt from requiring a WCC.

#### 3.5.2 Police officers

Sworn Victoria Police officers or sworn Australian Federal Police officers are exempt from requiring a WCC.

#### **4. LINKS AND REFERENCES**

School Policy Advisory Guide:

- [Volunteer Checks](#)
- [Volunteer Workers](#)

DET Human Resources:

- [Suitability for Employment Checks](#)

External Links:

- [Victorian Institute of Teaching](#)
- [Working with Children Check](#)

Ministerial Order:

- Ministerial Order No. 870 – Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools

#### **5. EVALUATION**

This policy will be reviewed at least annually or more often if necessary due to changes in legislation or circumstances.

*This policy was ratified by School Council on*

## FLOWCHART for WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECKS

### NB:

It is mandatory that all volunteers and locally employed staff hold current Working with Children Checks.

Business Manager has primary responsibility for checking and processing WCCs.

All Administration staff are also responsible for fully implementing this process in the event of the Business Manager's absence or at the instruction of the Business Manager.

