

## Community Engagement (Volunteers)

### Purpose:

To develop strong community engagement with the wider school community and to positively assist with the implementation of school programs; and to strengthen the relationships between school and home. Sunshine Special Developmental School (SDS) will 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.

### Engagement:

Opportunities for school involvement and engagement may include:

- School Council
- Community Engagement Program (resource making, uniform swap shop, gardening)
- Whole School Events (Celebration Day)
- Learning Centre Events (Book Week, Science Week)
- Little Shop of Sunshine (Mother's Day, Father's Day, Christmas)
- Sports Day and/or Swimming

### Promotion

- Positive Climate for Learning (PCL) fortnightly Newsletters
- PCL Community Engagement Calendar

### 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, guardian, parent/guardian's spouse or domestic partner, stepparent, parent/guardian'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 (i.e. indemnified) from action by others in the event of an injury or accident whilst they are performing volunteer school work in good faith.

## POLICY

Sunshine SDS is committed to implementing and following practices which protect the safety and wellbeing of children and our staff and volunteers. Sunshine SDS recognises the significant and valuable contribution that volunteers make to the human resources available to the school, and consequently they deserve encouragement, effective management, support and recognition.

### Becoming a volunteer

Members of our school community who would like to volunteer are encouraged to contact our Positive Climate for Learning team to discuss access to our Community Engagement Program.

Volunteers are actively encouraged to partake in school activities, and will be invited to do so.

Volunteers will be sought formally through the newsletter, written invitations and personal approaches, as well as informally through conversation and opportunity.

The school will seek to provide a variety of opportunities for volunteer participation, particularly opportunities for fathers, grandparents, and take into consideration equitable provision of volunteer services across all areas of the school.

### Suitability checks including Working with Children Checks

#### *Working with students*

Sunshine SDS values the many volunteers that assist in our classrooms, with school events and programs. To ensure that we are meeting our legal obligations under the *Working With Children Act 2005* (Vic) and the Child Safe Standards, Sunshine SDS 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.

Considering our legal obligations, and our commitment to ensuring that Sunshine SDS is a child safe environment, we will require volunteers to obtain a WWC Check and produce their valid card to the office staff or volunteer coordinator for verification in the following circumstances:

- **Volunteers who are not parent/guardians/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/guardian/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/guardians/family volunteers** who assist with excursions (including swimming) and similar events, regardless of whether their own child is participating or not.
- **Parent/guardians/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.

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*

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, school council, participating in sub-committees of school council, 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, Sunshine SDS 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.

School council members and volunteers on any sub-committee of school council will be asked to provide a valid WWC Check. Whilst we acknowledge that these volunteers will not be engaging in child-related work as

part of their role, even when there is a student sitting on the school council, we believe that it is important that our volunteers who are involved in making important decisions about our school which will have an impact on students do have a valid WWC Check.

## 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 Code of Conduct Policy / Statement of Commitment to Child Safety, School Vision and Values Policy. 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 Sunshine SDS.

Sunshine SDS 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 Sunshine SDS'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.

The principal (or their nominee) will determine what supervision, if any, of volunteers is required for the type of work being performed.

## 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.

## RELATED POLICIES AND RESOURCES

*Statement of Vision and Values, Visitors Policy, Child Safety and Code of Conduct Policy*

## REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was ratified by School Council on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020.

This policy will be evaluated as part of a 3-year cycle of policy review.

## Version: Final

Review Date: December 2023

*'Sunshine SDS is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices heard about decisions that affect their lives'.*

