



Strathmore
PRIMARY SCHOOL No.4612

Strive to Achieve

WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECKS POLICY

RATIONALE

The Department of Education and Training (DET) and School Councils have a responsibility to ensure the safety of all children and employees, and maintain the security of assets by requiring and maintaining high standards of professional conduct from employees and volunteers.

In meeting these responsibilities, the Department of Education and Training and School Councils must be satisfied that only those employees and volunteers who meet the highest standards of probity and suitability are employed. Such assessments may include reference or referee checks, medical assessments, qualification verification and criminal record checks.

Schools are required to comply with the Working with Children Act 2005. The Act introduced a **Working with Children Check (WWC Check)**, thereby creating minimum checking standards across Victoria for people who work or volunteer with children. The WWC Check will ensure that people who are unsuitable to engage in 'child-related work' do not do so. The Act defines 'child-related work' as work which usually involves (or is likely to involve) regular, direct contact with a child where that contact is **not directly supervised**, and in any of twenty child-related occupational fields listed in the Act. 'Child-related work' may be either paid or unpaid (voluntary).

There are exemptions from The Act including people under 18 years of age, sworn police officers, teachers currently registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT).

Changes to the WORKING WITH CHILDREN ACT 2005 (Act) commenced on **1 August 2017**.

The changes to the Act are designed to strengthen the protection of Victorian children by implementing key recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The changes do not affect the requirement for individuals who engage in 'child-related work' to have a Working with Children Check (WWC Check). 'Child-related work' is any work that involves 'direct contact' with a child that is part of the person's work. It does not include

occasional direct contact with a child that is incidental to the work the person is performing at the school (whether or not that work is paid).

KEY CHANGES FOR SCHOOLS

There are two key changes to the Act:

1. **The definition of 'direct contact' with children has been expanded to include oral, written or electronic communication as well as face-to-face and physical contact; and**
2. **A WWC Check is now required for anyone engaging in 'child-related work' regardless of whether contact with a child is supervised by another person or not. This means that a volunteer or visitor who is supervised by a teacher must have a WWC Check if they engage in 'child related work'.**

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SCHOOLS?

Schools should review the parts of their visitors and volunteers policies that refer to requirements for WWC Checks to:

- update the definition of 'direct contact' with children so that it includes oral, written or electronic communication (as well as face-to-face and physical contact);
- clarify that anyone engaging in 'child-related work' as part of their role or duties, whether an employee, volunteer, visitor or contractor must have a WWC Check regardless of whether they are being supervised by a teacher or another adult with a WWC Check.

The Department is updating its School Policy and Advisory Guide (SPAG) pages, and developing an exemplar policy template for principals to assist them to develop their volunteers and visitors policies. Further information will be provided as soon as possible.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR PARENTS?

The changes to the Act have not altered the provisions relating to parents.

A parent, or immediate relative, who volunteers at their child's school as part of an activity that their child is participating in is not required by law to have a WWC Check.

However, schools are encouraged to develop their own policies to assess and verify the suitability of volunteers and visitors to the school, and may decide to require a parent to have a WWC Check, depending on the activities and nature of the volunteer work being performed.

Parent volunteers are encouraged to contact their child's school to determine if the school requires them to hold a Working with Children Check card.

AIMS

- To ensure students under the school's care are protected from being exposed to inappropriate people.
- To ensure all people engaged in 'child related work' with the school's students and who are required to have Working with Children Checks, do so.
- To ensure that the school complies with the relevant Acts and laws.
- To provide an environment that is safe.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Principal or his/her representatives will ensure that all persons engaged in "child related work" at Strathmore Primary School and who are required to have WWC Checks, do so.

The following information is provided to better understand the Act as it pertains to specific categories of persons likely to engage in "child related work" within the school.

- **Principal and Teachers**

Members of the Principal and Teacher Class are employed pursuant to the Teaching Service Act 1981 and are required to be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching as a condition of employment. Teachers and principals who are registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching are exempt from the Working with Children Act 2005 and do not require a WWC Check as they undergo full Criminal Records Checks.

- **Education Support Staff**

All ES staff will be required to undergo a police check. When appointed, an ES staff member must produce their WWC Check. A copy will be placed in their personnel file.

- **Casual Relief Teachers**

Casual relief teachers are required to be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching. Accordingly, they qualify for an exemption as they undergo full Criminal Records Checks.

- **Other Casual Employees**

Casual employees in schools, other than casual relief teachers, are employed pursuant to the Education Act 1958 and therefore are required to demonstrate their suitability for employment by undergoing a WWC Check or a criminal records check conducted by the DET.

- **Contractors**

All contractors and trades people must report to the school Principal or delegate. The Principal or delegate must sight the WWC Card before any work with or near children can commence on the school site within school hours.

Regular contractors in the school (eg. cleaners and regularly used trades people) must present their WWC Card at the office. Office staff will copy the card and keep it on file as a record.

If a trades person does not have a WWC Card and is working on school grounds within school hours, the Principal or delegate will supervise their work and escort them off site once the job is complete.

When in the school, all contractors/trades people must comply with the Strathmore Primary School Visitor's Policy.

- **Student Teachers and Student Internships**

Student teachers/interns must have a WWC Check prior to commencing a practicum in a Victorian Government School. As student teachers/interns do not receive payment for undertaking a practicum, a volunteer WWC Check is acceptable.

- **Volunteers**

To be a volunteer at a school a WWC Card provided by the Department of Justice is required.

All volunteers must present their WWC Card to the office where a list of registered volunteers will be established and kept up to date. A 'read only' copy of this register will be kept on the staff drive for ease of access.

- The School Council will require volunteers to present a WWC Check for:
 - Participation in excursions and overnight camps and sleepovers.
 - Transport of students without staff members present.
 - Extra-curricular activities such as training of school sporting teams.
 - Involvement in any other events where it is deemed by the Principal and/or School Council as appropriate.
- When deemed necessary, the Principal or delegate will exercise his/her authority to require a potential volunteer to undergo a WWC Check irrespective of the volunteer's exemption from the Act.
- The Principal or delegate will sight and retain a record of all employees' WWC Checks unique numbers and expiry dates.
 - The Principal or delegate may enquire on the status of a WWC Check at any time by visiting www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren and entering a WWC Check unique number or alternatively by telephoning 1300 652 879.
 - The Principal or delegate will require all persons to display the WWC Card on their person at all practicable times when working or volunteering at the school or during school related activities.
 - WWC Checks are free for volunteers, but cannot be used for paid employment.
 - WWC Checks for paid employment can be used to show suitability for volunteer work.

WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

For more information about parents in schools, see: [Parent Participation at School](#)

The Department of Justice and Regulation has developed fact sheets and advice pages to help Victorian organisations understand their new obligations. For more information, see: [Working with Children – Toolkit for Organisations](#)

For more information on how to keep children safe at your school through implementing the Child Safe Standards, see: [DET PROTECT portal](#)

Where can I direct volunteers or contractors to get a WWC or for more information?

WWC Check applications can be made online at workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au and are free for volunteers.

Australia Post has more than 400 outlets processing WWC Check identity verifications across Victoria, as well as a video explaining what applicants need to do, see: [Lodging your application - Working With Children Check](#)

Individuals can also contact the WWC Check Customer Support Line on **1300 652 879** (local call charge) for further information.

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's on-going review cycle. It is anticipated that the policy will be reviewed after four years of implementation, however, changes as deemed necessary by the school's leadership and/or changes in Departmental terminology may necessitate that the policy is reviewed at an earlier time.

THIS POLICY WAS LAST RATIFIED BY SCHOOL COUNCIL ON AUGUST, 2017