Working with Children Policy

Purpose:	To assist in protecting students from harm by ensuring that people who work with, or care for them are subject to a screening process and to comply with the Child Safe Standards in Ministerial Order 1359 and the Working with Children Act 2005.
Scope:	All VHS Staff, Volunteers, and contractors attending school during school hours for child-related work.
Implemented by:	School Principal (Child Safety Officer)
Approved by:	VHS Board
Reviewed:	Every two years or as regulatory changes arise or improvements are identified.
Communicated via:	VHS Website, Staff Induction, Parent Handbook, Policies and Procedures Manual

Overview

Village High School owes a duty of care to students to take reasonable precautions to prevent the abuse of a child by an individual associated with the school while the child is under its care, supervision, or authority. The school will assess and verify the suitability of staff, contractors and volunteers who will work with children.

The Working with Children Check (WWCC) is a minimum checking standard set by the Worker Screening Act 2020 for those who work with children, either on a paid or voluntary basis. It checks for serious sexual, violent and drug-related offences, failure to protect and failure to report offences, as well as disciplinary findings of professional agencies such as the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

Requirements

Unless an exemption applies to a person, or the individual is performing child-connected work (work or situations in which the contact with children is indirect, occasional, and incidental to their work) a valid WWCC is the minimum standard for all adults working at the School.

If a volunteer or contractor has an exemption or is performing child-connected work, it is the responsibility of the Principal to determine if a WWCC or other clearance may still be required based on a child safety risk assessment.

The school will investigate and assess all potential staff member's history of work involving children and seek references that can confirm that person's suitability for the job and working with children. No employees will commence duties prior to providing a verified WWCC. Once engaged, the School, will also continue to monitor and assess the continuing suitability of all staff members in relation to child related work.

Responsibilities

Staff

It is the responsibility of the Principal to ensure that only suitable and eligible persons are employed in the school. The Village School Recruitment Process will be used to ensure the suitability of all staff and contractors.

Teachers & Casual Relief Teachers

- Teachers must have a valid VIT registration card
- Proof of identity must be verified
- At least two positive reference checks completed before employment commences

Non-teaching staff

- A WWCC is required by all employed staff at THE SCHOOL whether or not working directly with children or supervised by a teacher
- Proof of identity must be verified
- At least two positive reference checks completed before employment commences

Contractors

WWCCs are required by all Contractors who will be on a cyclical schedule working on the school grounds during school hours, in the vicinity of students.

Volunteers

It is the responsibility of the Principal to ensure that only suitable persons volunteer in the school. A valid WWCC is required by all volunteers who are assisting at a school camp, any other approved school activity outside of school grounds, driving the school bus or transporting students other than their own children in their own vehicle as part of a school excursion.

A WWCC for paid employment can be used to show suitability for volunteer work, however a volunteer WWCC is not suitable for clearance to commence paid work.

Maintaining records

A copy of the staff member, contractor or volunteer's WWCC will be kept on the file at the school and recorded on the School's WWC register which is maintained by the administration team. The School will ensure staff members, contractors and volunteers hold a valid WWCC card and will add expiry dates to a central calendar to allow monitoring of their expiry; at a minimum annually at the commencement of the school year.

It is the responsibility of the employees or volunteers to:

- provide the School with the successful WWCC card or current VIT registration card prior to commencement of duties

- notify the 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 or if their WWCC or VIT registration has been suspended.

- apply for a new WWCC before their card expires.

The VIT teacher register will be populated at the time of employment and a copy of a teacher's VIT card and identity documents will be put in their employment file. This task will be completed by administration staff and is included on the Staff Induction Checklist which is signed-off by the Principal.

VIT registrations will be checked via the VIT School Portal at the time of employment, during the annual VIT Census in April and during September of each year.

Staff employment contracts require teachers to advise any changes to their registration or permission to teach, including conditions, limitations or limitations or restrictions to the Principal as soon as they occur. They are also required to advise the school if they are under investigation or charged with any offence that would impact their ability to work with children, drive a vehicle or be employed at the school.

Should a teacher have any condition, limitation or restriction on their registration or permission to teach, this will be noted in the relevant column in the teacher register. The Principal will check this register when changes are made to a teacher's subject or year level allocation to ensure they have adequate permission to teach at that level or in that curriculum area.

Exemptions

The Worker Screening Act 2020 identifies categories of individuals who are exempted from the requirement to have a WWCC. The School reserves the right to require an exempted individual to have a WWCC if the Principal considers it necessary in the circumstances.

Parents volunteering in an activity with their child

Parents volunteering in an activity in which their child participates or normally participates, are exempt from needing a WWCC except for the scenarios listed under the Volunteer section. ***Example:*** *Emily has volunteered to make and fit costumes for other children in her daughter's school play. As Emily's daughter usually participates in the school play, Emily does not need a Check, even if her daughter does not attend all of the play rehearsals or performances.*

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 WWCC.

Police officers

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

Other

Other exemptions include

- Anyone under the age of 18
- A student aged 18 or 19 attending a volunteer placement organised by an educational institution
- Those who hold an equivalent check from another state (which allows work or volunteering for a maximum of 30 days in a calendar year)

For a full list of exemptions and examples refer to: Working with Children Check – Exemptions

Related Documentation

Village School Induction Plan
Village School Recruitment and Onboarding Process
WWCC Register
Employment Contracts and Terms and Conditions of Employment
VIT Register
Working With Children Suitability Check Flowchart for Schools

Related Policies

Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy
Protecting Children Policy
Student Supervision Policy