



Burwood East Special Developmental School

Volunteers Policy



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact school on 03 9803 4590.

At Burwood East Special Developmental School (BESDS), we consider the health, safety and wellbeing of all children and young people to be our highest priority. We strive to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people at our school at all times. We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously and consistently. We are committed to creating a safe, respectful and inclusive school environment where all students can be happy, confident and resilient, regardless of their sexual or gender identity, cultural background, disability or other circumstances. We take account of the diversity of all children, including the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities and vulnerable children.

PURPOSE

To outline the processes that Burwood East Special Developmental School (BESDS) will follow to recruit, screen, supervise and manage volunteers to provide a child safe environment, and to explain the legal rights of volunteers.

If you do not understand any aspect of this policy, or you would like to talk about any concerns you have, please contact our school on 03 9803 4590 or burwood.east.sds@education.vic.gov.au

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.

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

Burwood East Special Developmental School (BESDS) is committed to implementing and following practices which protect the safety and wellbeing of children and our staff and volunteers. BESDS values the reciprocal benefit of having volunteers as part of our school community. In summary, volunteers should; enhance learning programs, provide additional support for students when classes are out on community access or excursions, promote better school and community relations and links by enhancing community understanding of Special Education and disabilities and provide an opportunity for volunteers to learn new skills and gain entry to the workplace.

The procedures set out below are designed to ensure that BESDS'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 school with an expression of interest in volunteering. Examples of this are calling the school, emailing the school through the school website and making arrangements through a third party such as a course coordinator.
- All enquiries should be directed to the leading teacher , or nominee, who can then discuss the viability of volunteering, procedures such as inductions and ensuring the needs of the volunteer and the school are met.

COVID-19 vaccination information

Our school follows Department of Education and Training policy with respect to the requirements relating to attendance on school sites and COVID – 19 vaccinations.

Suitability checks including Working with Children Clearances

Working with students

BESDS values the many volunteers that assist in our classrooms, camps, excursions and a variety of programs. To ensure that we are meeting our legal obligations under the *Working With Screening Act* and the Child Safe Standards, BESDS is required to undertake suitability checks which may include a

Working with Children Clearance, proof of identity, work history involving children and/or reference checks.

Considering our legal obligations, and our commitment to ensuring that BESDS is a child safe environment, we will require volunteers to obtain a WWC Clearance and produce their valid card to the front office (a copy will be taken of the card and kept in a folder for record keeping) for verification in the following circumstances:

- **Volunteers who are not parent/family members** of any student at the school 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 assist with excursions, 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

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 and 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 Clearances or other suitability checks as they are not engaged in child-related work and children are not generally present during these activities. However, Burwood East 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.

Training and Induction

Under the Child Safe standards volunteers must have an appropriate induction and training in child safety and wellbeing.

To support us to maintain a child safe environment, before engaging in any work where children are present or reasonably likely to be present, volunteers must familiarise themselves with the policies, procedures and Child Safety policies and Child Safety Code of conduct on our website and ensure the actions and requirements in these documents are followed when volunteering for our school.

Depending on the nature and responsibilities of their role, BESDS may also require volunteers to complete additional child safety training.

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 Wellbeing Policy, our Child Safety Code of Conduct and our Statement of Values and School Philosophy.

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 (or their nominee) will determine the level of school staff supervision required for volunteers, depending on the type of work being performed, and with a focus on ensuring the safety and wellbeing of students.

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 Burwood East SDS.

Privacy and information-sharing

Volunteers must ensure that any student information they become aware of because of their volunteer work is managed sensitively and in accordance with the [Schools' Privacy Policy](#) and the Department's policy on [Privacy and Information Sharing](#).

Under these policies, student information can and should be shared with relevant school staff to:

- support the student's education, wellbeing and health;
- reduce the risk of reasonably foreseeable harm to the student, other students, staff or visitors;
- make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the student's disability; or
- provide a safe and secure workplace.

Volunteers must immediately report any child safety concerns that they become aware of to a member of staff to ensure appropriate action. There are some circumstances where volunteers may also be obliged to disclose information to authorities outside of the school such as to Victoria Police.

For further information on child safety responding and reporting obligations refer to: *Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures*.

Records management

While it is unlikely volunteers will be responsible for any school records during their volunteer work, any school records that volunteers are responsible for must be provided to the leading teacher to ensure they are managed in accordance with the Department's policy: [Records Management – Schools](#).

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.

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website <https://www.besds.vic.edu.au/>
- Included in induction processes for relevant staff
- Included as a link in all invitations to prospective volunteers
- Discussed in an annual staff briefing/meeting
- Made available in hard copy from school administration on request

RELATED POLICIES AND RESOURCES

BESDS policies and resources relevant to this policy include:

- *Statement of Values and School Philosophy,*
- *Visitors Policy,*
- *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy,*
- *Child Safety Code of Conduct,*

- *Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures,*
- *Inclusion and Diversity Policy*
- <https://www.besds.vic.edu.au/>

Department policies:

- [Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination](#)
- [Child Safe Standards](#)
- [Privacy and Information Sharing](#)
- [Records Management – School Records](#)
- [Sexual Harassment](#)
- [Volunteers in Schools](#)
- [Volunteer OHS Management](#)
- [Working with Children and Other Suitability Checks for School Volunteers and Visitors](#)
- [Workplace Bullying](#)

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	October 2022
Consultation with School Council	24/10/2022
Consultation with School community by newsletter	04/11/2022
Consultation with School community by website	November 2022
Approved by	Principal 12/10/2022
Next scheduled review date	October 2024