



TASMANIAN
CATHOLIC
education commission

POLICY (OPERATIONAL) VOLUNTEERS IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Systemic Catholic Schools Principal's Handbook
Systemic Catholic School's Governance Constitution

Adopted by:
St. Brigid's Catholic School, New Norfolk



VOLUNTEERS IN TASMANIAN CATHOLIC EDUCATION POLICY

RELATED DOCUMENTS
Taking Care
Employees in Catholic Education

RATIONALE

Catholic Education recognises and values the significant contribution made by volunteers to their communities. The richness and diversity of this contribution is both encouraged and supported by schools and parishes in an environment characterised by a:

*... genuine partnership (between) school staff, parents, caregivers, teachers, parish, students, and the wider community. **

As families are more often than not the ones offering assistance to schools in a voluntary capacity, then tapping into this rich resource of volunteers is just one more of the many available strategies that enables schools to:

*... recognise and support parents as the first and foremost educators of their children.**

The purpose of this policy therefore is to provide schools and other educational communities with some clear direction in fulfilling their responsibilities to all involved in the various school-based educational endeavours that draw upon the assistance of volunteers.

In particular, the policy is designed to ensure that school communities exercise their duty of care with respect to 'child protection' responsibilities by providing:

*... a secure environment that ensures the safety and well-being of all.**

* TCEC Vision and Mission Statement (2006)

POLICY

Whilst schools are encouraged to maximise the recognition of the role of volunteers and their contribution to Catholic education, they are required to provide a level of direction and support for volunteers that ensures their contribution aligns with the school's Vision and Mission Statement and Strategic Plan, as well as meeting the requirements of all relevant legislation, particularly legislation that pertains to matters of occupational health and safety and child protection.

DEFINITIONS

Volunteers Those invited parents, caregivers and others usually from within school communities who contribute unpaid time, energy and expertise for the betterment of the school and its students, on tasks either planned or unplanned, long term or short term, in classrooms or out, requiring highly skilled contributions or otherwise.

Direct Contact Volunteers Volunteers who are involved in providing support, guidance and supervision directly to students and who would potentially have 'unsupervised' contact with students during the normal course of providing the voluntary service (e.g. through in-class instructional programs, school camps, sporting programs, school canteen, etc.).

Indirect Contact Volunteers Volunteers who are involved in providing support and services to the school community whilst not directly assisting a specific group of students. Generally such volunteers would not have responsibility for supervising students and would not have 'unsupervised' contact with students during the normal course of providing the voluntary service (e.g. working bees; school fairs, social activities, etc).

PRINCIPLES

1. Schools should endeavour to utilise the benefits of appropriate voluntary help from within the school community for the benefit of the school community.

2. Volunteers should be valued for the work that they do for Catholic school communities.
3. Every opportunity should be taken by schools to publicly recognise volunteers and the contributions that they make to Catholic education.
4. Volunteers have a right to work in a safe and secure workplace environment.
5. Volunteers should be provided with appropriate support, and/or instruction to help them carry out their tasks at school. They will not be required to carry out tasks with which they feel uncomfortable or not skilled enough to do.
6. As with all others who work within a school community, volunteers must be made aware of their legal rights and responsibilities within their workplace environment.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ALL VOLUNTEERS

1. Schools should seek to provide a variety of opportunities for volunteer participation. Volunteers are invited and actively encouraged to take part in a variety of school activities. Volunteers may be sought to assist with in-class instructional programs, cultural and sporting activities, school camps and excursions, and a range of fund raising and school development programs.
2. Volunteers may be sought formally through school newsletters, written invitations, formal nominations and personal approaches, as well as informally through conversation and opportunity.
3. Volunteers are required to carry out tasks in a manner consistent with school expectations, including maintenance of a professional, cooperative and confidential working environment.
4. Injuries sustained by volunteers must be reported to the Principal. Schools will provide first aid as required. Schools must hold insurance policies that cover volunteers in respect of liability claims from third parties, loss and injury, and for personal accidents. Volunteers should notify the school of any such matters listed above.
5. School emergency management procedures will ensure that sign-in and sign out procedures are in place so that volunteers within the school at the time of an emergency or evacuation practice drill will be recognised and be appropriately catered for during that time.

6. All volunteers will be expected to comply with the Catholic Education *Code of Conduct*, a copy of which is available on the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office website.
7. Complaints by or about volunteers will be addressed via the school's grievance procedure.
8. It is recognised that within the school community there are potentially two categories of volunteers, namely:
 - **direct contact** volunteers who have specific responsibility for and involvement with students; and
 - **indirect contact** volunteers who assist the school on specific occasions but do not have direct contact with or responsibility for students.

GUIDELINES FOR DIRECT CONTACT VOLUNTEERS

1. All **direct contact** volunteers must be registered with the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office (TCEO) and fully screened for child protection purposes. Except in exceptional circumstances, volunteers who are not officially registered should not be allowed to work directly with students or to assume responsibility for their welfare.
2. The TCEO will develop and maintain an updated registration database of the volunteers who are approved to have **direct contact** with and supervision of students. Such volunteers will be issued with an approved *Volunteer's Card*. In accordance with Archdiocesan policy, the volunteer's card may also be recognised by other Catholic Church agencies.
3. In accordance also with Archdiocesan and TCEC policies, **direct contact** volunteers will be required to undertake an appropriate Police Check and sign a statutory declaration relating to any pending or spent convictions or charges relating to children. These, of themselves, are not necessarily a comprehensive 'good character' check and additional references regarding good character may be required (e.g. in the case of volunteers assuming responsibility for students in an unsupervised manner for an extended period).
4. Volunteers assisting in activities that require **direct contact** with children, are required to:

- obtain a satisfactory Police Check prior to their participation. Schools will pay the costs for volunteers to undergo such Police Checks,
 - sign a statutory declaration relating to any pending or spent convictions or charges relating to children,
 - attend a formal workshop, organised by each school or organisation, to be advised of their responsibilities with regards to Child Protection and Protective Behaviour protocols (especially with regards to the obligations and processes for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect), the Catholic Education *Code of Conduct* and any other expectations and policy protocols of the school, and
 - if direct contact volunteers are unable to attend the formal workshops organised at the school level as outlined in 12.3 above, information packs will be given to them, containing material on their rights and responsibilities, including Child Protection and Protective Behaviour protocols. Each volunteer will then be required to sign a form to the effect that they have read, understood and will adhere to the responsibilities as outlined.
5. In order to obtain a volunteer's card, direct contact volunteers will be required to satisfy the requirements of Guideline 12. In some circumstances, for instance where there is a delay in a Police Check being completed, the school Principal may grant provisional approval for volunteers who are not officially registered to work directly with children for an agreed period of time. This provisional approval will only be granted upon receipt of the statutory declaration (12.2) and an appropriate briefing regarding Child Protection and Protective Behaviour protocols (12.3 or 12.4).
6. All **direct contact** volunteers working directly with students will be required to update and renew their volunteer status as per items 12.1 and 12.2 once every three years.

GUIDELINES FOR INDIRECT CONTACT VOLUNTEERS

1. Volunteers who, in the normal course of their activities, will only be having ***indirect contact*** with students are not required to obtain a 'volunteer's card'.

REFERENCES

Collaborative Caring Protocol and Summary Document
Protective Practices Document
Archdiocesan Code of Conduct
Archdiocesan Child Protection and Intervention Policy
Catholic Education Code of Conduct

FORMS

Statutory declaration

APPENDICES

Nil

SIGNED:



TCEC Chairperson

DATE:

26.6.2007

Adopted by School:

SIGNED:

Principal

DATE:

Approved by:	TCEC – March 2007
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