

## WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECKS POLICY

### Rationale

The Working with Children Checks for Employment (WWC Check E) policy assists Whittlesea Secondary College (WSC) in the protection of our students and maintains a safe environment by ensuring any person engaged in child-related work (paid or unpaid) is compliant with the *Working With Children Act 2005*.

- Whittlesea Secondary College will assess and verify the suitability of staff and volunteers who will work with children.
- Unless an exemption applies to a person, a valid WWC Check E is the minimum standard for all adults working with children.

In addition to a WWC Check E, Whittlesea Secondary College may also require a criminal record check.

- This may be considered necessary when certain offences are relevant to the duties of the volunteer or staff member, for example checking for dishonesty offences may be required for a role that involves managing finances or petty cash.

### Aims

We recognise our obligation to ensure that any program or content delivered at the School is delivered and supported by suitably clearance checked staff, visitors and/or volunteers.

We aim to:

- provide a safe and secure environment for all of our students, and to establish protocols and procedures that effectively monitor and manage the suitability of staff, visitors and volunteers working at the school

### Implementation

#### **Child Safety**

- As a result of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the Victorian Government introduced a range of measures to better protect children. These measures include:
  - The Child Safe Standards
  - Reportable Conduct Scheme
  - Organisational Duty of Care
- Whittlesea Secondary College (WSC) uphold our Statement of Commitment to Child Safety (refer to the WSC Child Safe Environment Policy, Appendix A).
- All staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work will be informed about, and expected to adhere to, the Whittlesea Secondary College Child Safety Code of Conduct (refer to the WSC Child Safe Environment Policy, Appendix B).
- The Child Safety Code of Conduct applies in all school situations, including school camps and in the use of digital technology and social media.

#### **Suitability for Employment**

- It is the responsibility of the Principal to ensure that only suitable and eligible persons are employed in the school.
- Prior to employment, the Principal must be satisfied that the person meets the required Suitability for Employment Checks (refer to [DET Suitability for Employment](#)).
- To maintain high standards of conduct and professionalism in our school, Whittlesea Secondary College will ensure that the Department of Education and Training's (DET) policy and procedures for criminal record checks are implemented.

- Whittlesea Secondary College adheres to the DET procedures for the conduct of criminal records checks for all school-based employees, including arrangements that allow for the acceptance of the criminal records check conducted by the Victorian Institute of Teaching and WWC Checks to meet the Department's pre-employment suitability for employment requirements (refer to [DET Criminal Records Check](#)).

### **Volunteers**

- A volunteer school worker is a person who voluntarily engages in school work without payment or reward. This is a broad definition including those who participate in school community activities such as:
  - fundraising
  - assisting with excursions
  - 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 any assistance in the work of any school
  - attending meetings in relation to government schools convened by any organisation, which receives government financial support.
- WWC Checks are required by all volunteers who will be working with students for school activities whether or not supervised by a teacher and whether or not the activity is on school grounds or during school hours.
  - For example, a volunteer who is assisting at a school camp or any other approved school activity outside of school grounds will require a WWC Check.
  - See below for a list of exemptions.

### **Commencing volunteering**

- A volunteer can commence work in Whittlesea Secondary College when they provide a receipt as proof they have applied for a WWC Check E with the Department of Justice and have otherwise been considered by the school to be suitable.

### **Working with Children Check for Employees and Volunteers**

- The WWC Check E is a minimum checking standard set by the *Working with Children Act 2005* for those who work with children, either on a paid or voluntary basis.
- It checks for serious sexual, violent and drug-related offences as well as disciplinary findings of professional agencies such as the Victorian Institute of Teaching.
- To be a volunteer at Whittlesea Secondary College a valid Working with Children Card provided by the Department of Justice is required. This card is:
  - valid for 5 years
  - transferable between volunteer organisations
  - free of charge for volunteers, but cannot be used for paid employment.
- Under the section marked 'Details of Organisation', candidates must ensure they state Whittlesea Secondary College.
- Note: WWC Checks for paid employment can be used to show suitability for volunteer work.

### **Maintaining records**

- A copy of the staff member or volunteer's WWC Check E will be kept on the file at the school.
- Whittlesea Secondary College has procedures to ensure staff members and volunteers hold a valid WWC Check E card; at a minimum annually at the commencement of the school year.
- It is the responsibility of the staff member or volunteer to:
  - Provide Whittlesea Secondary College with the successful WWC Check E card prior to commencement and have Whittlesea Secondary College listed under Details of Organisation.
  - 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 WWC Check E has been suspended.
  - Apply for a new WWC Check E before their card expires.

## **Privacy**

- Whittlesea Secondary College applies privacy principles when collecting, using, retaining or disposing of personal or health information in accordance with the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (Vic) and the *Health Records Act 2001* (Vic).

## **Exemptions**

- The Working with Children Act identifies categories of individuals who are exempted from the requirement to have a WWC Check. Whittlesea Secondary College reserves the right to nevertheless require a WWC Check E if the principal considers it necessary in the circumstances.
  - The exempt categories are:
    - Student volunteers - A student who is 18 or 19 years of age is exempt from the WWC Check E for volunteer work organised by or held at the same educational institution they attend.
    - Parent volunteering – Parents volunteering in an activity, in which their child participates or normally participates
    - Family members – Family members and people who are closely related to the child. Closely related to a child means:
      - Parent
      - spouse or domestic partner
      - step-parent
      - mother-in-law or father-in-law
      - grandparent
      - uncle or aunt
      - brother or sister, including half siblings, step siblings, brother-in-law and sister-in-law
    - Teachers – Registered teachers or teachers who have permission to teach from the Victorian Institute of Teacher under Part 2.6 of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006
    - Police officers – Sworn Police officers or sworn Australian Federal Police Officers
    - Waiting for a card – Employees waiting for a card having paid for their check are able to work as long as the receipt has been sighted
- If a volunteer's occupation exempts them from the requirement to have a WWC Check E e.g. police officers, teachers, they must provide evidence to support their claim to an exemption.

## **Contractors**

- The Principals and managers assess the duties to be performed by contractors to determine whether they constitute 'child-related work' and will therefore require a WWC Check.
- Contractors such as IT technicians, gardeners, cleaners and maintenance staff require a WWC Check E as they are frequently in schools during normal school hours.
- The Principals and managers will contact the Conduct and Ethics Branch on 9637 2594 for advice on whether the duties to be performed by a contractor meet the definition of 'child-related work' as contained in the Act if there is any doubt.

## **Related Legislation and Policies**

- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (Vic)
- *Health Records Act 2001* (Vic)
- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*
- *Working with Children Act 2005*
- [Ministerial Order No. 870](#)
- [DET Child Safety Policy](#)
- [DET Suitability for Employment](#)
- [DET Criminal Records Check](#)

- [VIT National Police History Check](#)
- WSC Child Safe Environment Policy
- WSC Visitors and Volunteers Policy

## **Appendices**

### **Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

**This Policy was last ratified by School Council in: 2017**