



BENTON JUNIOR COLLEGE

VOLUNTEER POLICY

Rationale

Many volunteers assist and support the school on a daily basis. The school has a legal obligation to ensure that all volunteers are suitably screened for the safety of students and staff.

Aim

- To outline the processes that Benton Junior College will follow to recruit, screen, supervise and manage volunteers to provide a child safe environment, and to explain the legal rights of volunteers.
- 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.

Implementation

Benton Junior College is committed to implementing and following practices which protect the safety and wellbeing of children and our staff and volunteers. Benton Junior College recognises and welcomes the contribution of parents/carers and the members of the community into the school to assist and support classroom and/or school activities. These volunteers assist across a wide range of activities such as reading in classrooms, literacy and numeracy activities, fund raising, sporting and other specialist activities.

The procedures set out below are designed to ensure that Benton Junior College'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 appropriate staff member. Teachers may place requests in newsfeeds and ask for a particular support. Parents/carers may also be asked to attend excursions and camps. They will contact the supervising teacher.

Suitability checks including Working with Children Checks

Working with students

Benton Junior College values the many volunteers that assist in our classrooms/with sports events/camps/excursions/school concerts/other events and programs. To ensure that we are meeting our legal obligations under the *Working With Children Act 2005 (Vic)* and the Child Safe Standards, Benton Junior College is required to undertake suitability checks which may include a Working With Children Check, proof of identity, work history involving children and/or reference checks.

Considering our legal obligations, and our commitment to ensuring that Benton Junior College is a child safe environment, we will require volunteers to obtain a WWC Check and produce their valid card to the Office for verification in the following circumstances:

- **Volunteers who are not parent/family members** of any student at the school are required to have a WWC Check if they are engaged in child-related work regardless of whether they are being supervised. This is a legal requirement under the *Working with Children Check Act* and must not be changed.
- **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. This is a legal requirement under the *Working with Children Check Act* and must not be changed.
- **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 regularly assist in school activities, regardless of whether their own child is participating or not are asked to have a WWC Check.

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 maintenance, working bees, parents meetings, school council, participating in sub-committees of school council, fete coordination, other 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 or other suitability checks as they are not engaged in child-related work and children are not generally present during these activities. However, Benton Junior College 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.

School council members and volunteers on any sub-committee of school council will be required to provide a valid WWC Check. Whilst we acknowledge that these volunteers will not be engaging in child-related work as

part of their role, we believe that it is important that our volunteers who are involved in making important decisions about our school which will have an impact on students do have a valid WWC Check.

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 Child First Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct Policy. 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 Benton Junior College.

Benton Junior College will provide any appropriate induction and/or training for all volunteer workers. The Principal (or their nominee) will determine what induction and/or training is necessary depending on what type of work the volunteer will be engaged in.

All volunteers will be provided induction in relation to the college's child safety practices, including reporting obligations and procedures. Our school has a Mandatory Reporting Obligations Policy which all staff and volunteers should be aware of.

The Principal (or their nominee) will determine what supervision, if any, of volunteers is required for the type of work being performed.

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.

Related policies and resources

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/community/pages/volunteers.aspx>

- *BJC Statement of Values and School Philosophy*
- *BJC Child Safety Policy*
- *BJC Child Safety Code of Conduct*

Review cycle

This policy was last approved by school council on 24th July 2018 and is scheduled for review in July 2020.