

Nathalia Primary School

Visitors in Schools Policy

Purpose of this policy

To ensure schools effectively manage visitors to the school.

Policy

Schools must develop school level policies and procedures to manage visitors to the school.

Principals must:

- implement Department and school level policies and procedures
- be responsible for visitors allowed into school
- ensure as a minimum a record of all visitors to the school is kept in the event of a school emergency or any future investigation
- ensure that visitors where required have the appropriate approvals to work with children
- ensure that any programs or content delivered by visitors (other than Special Religious Instruction) complies with the requirement that education in Victorian government schools is secular
- ensure that any programs delivered by visitors are delivered in a manner that supports and promotes the principles and practice of Australian democracy including a commitment to the following, as outlined in s 1.2.1 of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)*:
 - elected government
 - the rule of law
 - equal rights for all before the law
 - freedom of religion
 - freedom of speech and association
 - the values of openness and tolerance.

Rationale

To increase experience of the cultural and social features of the community, the Department encourages schools to:

- ensure parents/guardians partner in their children's development
- create strong partnerships with community services, schools, businesses and the wider community.

Types of visitors

Visitors to schools may include, but are not limited to:

- prospective parents and employees
- those who are addressing a learning or developmental need, such as:
 - parent and community volunteers
 - invited speakers
 - sessional instructors
 - representatives of community, business and service groups
 - local members of the State and Commonwealth Parliaments

- those who are conducting business such as:
 - uniform suppliers
 - booksellers
 - official school photographers
 - commercial salespeople
- trades people
- children's services agents
- talent scouts
- instructors providing Special Religious Instruction (SRI), see: [Special Religious Instruction](#)

Other visitors may include:

- Department of Health and Human Services Child Protection Workers, and Victoria Police, see: [Police and DHS Interviews](#)
- Persons who are authorised to enter on to the school premises, for a specific purpose (e.g. Worksafe or Environmental Health officers). In such cases school procedures should set out:
 - the process for checking the identification and authorisation of such persons
 - the process for recording their attendance
 - who should facilitate their entry on to the school premises in a manner consistent with the authorisation.

Policy and procedures

School policy and procedures regarding visitors to the school must, as a minimum:

- require all visitors arriving and departing during school hours to use a visitors book to record their name, signature, the date and time, and the purpose of the visit.
- include procedures for assessment and verification of the suitability of visitors to be in a location where children freely move about, learn and play. The evidence required is generally a working with children check (WWC Check); however if a visitor's occupation exempts them from the requirement to have a WWC check e.g. police officers, teachers, they must provide evidence to support their claim to an exemption
- ensure that any programs or content delivered by visitors complies with the requirement that education in Victorian government schools is secular (apart from the provision of Special Religious Instruction)
- ensure that any programs delivered by visitors are delivered in a manner that supports and promotes the principles and practice of Australian democracy including a commitment to the elected government, the rule of law, equal rights for all before the law, freedom of religion, freedom of speech and association and the values of openness and tolerance.

To develop local policies and procedures school councils should consult the views of school communities and address each of the following.

The Principal will consider:

Safety Needs:

- schools are not public places
- the safety of students and staff
- potential risks posed by visitors

- the requirements for paid or volunteer workers to have a Working with Children Check.

Visitors' Purpose:

- categories of visitors that will be allowed into the school and on what conditions
- potential benefits of different types of visits
- whether the proposed visit is appropriate for young people (in the relevant age group)
- whether the proposed visit, programs or content to be delivered is consistent with the values of public education, Department policies and the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)*
- visitors with commercial, advertising or marketing purpose
- the potential for a visitor or the content of their program/presentation to cause controversy within the school or broader community.

Educational Merit:

- whether the proposed visit is:
 - for an educational purpose
 - consistent with curriculum objectives
- the reorganisation of school programs or routines required in relation to the potential benefits to the students
- the appropriate use of Department resources, including teachers' time.

Legal Requirement:

- legal considerations and Department policies concerning:
 - privacy
 - photographing of students
 - mandatory reporting
 - Children First - promoting and protecting the rights and well-being of children.
 - delivery of Special Religious Instruction.

Working with Children Check:

- the suitability of visitors who will be in a location where children move freely about, learn and play
- whether an exemption to the Working With Children Check applies to a visitor
- the evidence provided by the visitor to support their exemption due to their occupation.

Procedures:

- how to communicate policies and procedures to staff, visitors and community
- how to impose conditions on visitors, if required
- how to manage and maintain a written record of all visitors
- whether visitors will be required to wear a distinguishing badge
- circumstances for visitors to be accompanied by a member of staff
- that visitors delivering programs directly to students are adequately supervised by teaching staff of the school, in order for the school's duty of care to be discharged to those students
- the familiarisation with school routines, including the emergency management plan, required for regular visitors

- when parents will be notified in advance about visitors to the school
- requirements for parental permission for students to participate in programs or related activities delivered by visitors.

Visiting speakers

Schools should:

- ensure the content of presentations and addresses contributes to the development of students' knowledge and understanding
- extend the invitation to external speakers to support its educational program, rather than allowing groups to use the school as a forum to advance their causes or beliefs, particularly if speaking on a controversial matter
- brief presenters about the nature of the school and its community
- ensure that visitors do not present information or programs that may conflict with the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, policies of the Department and the school
- respect the range of views held by students and their families.

Working with Children Checks

With reference to the requirement for Working With Children Checks, please note the following:

- the definition of 'direct contact' with children includes oral, written or electronic communication (as well as face-to-face and physical contact);
- anyone engaging in 'child-related work' as part of their role or duties, whether an employee, volunteer, visitor or contractor must have a WWC Check regardless of whether they are being supervised by a teacher or another adult with a WWC Check.

What does this mean for parents?

The August 1, 2017 changes to the Act have not altered the provisions relating to parents.

A parent, or immediate relative, who volunteers at their child's school as part of an activity that their child is participating in is not required by law to have a WWC Check.

However, schools are encouraged to develop their own policies to assess and verify the suitability of volunteers and visitors to the school, and may decide to require a parent to have a WWC Check, depending on the activities and nature of the volunteer work being performed.

Parent volunteers are encouraged to contact their child's school to determine if the school requires them to hold a Working with Children Check card.

Refer to: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/pages/spag.aspx> for all prerequisite and related policies.

Ratified by School Council:

