

VOLUNTEERS POLICY



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact the Victorian School of Languages (03) 9474 0500.

PURPOSE

To outline the processes that the Victorian School of Languages (VSL) will follow to recruit, screen, supervise and manage volunteers to provide a child safe environment, and to explain the legal rights of volunteers.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the recruitment, screening, supervision and management of all people who volunteer at our school.

DEFINITIONS

Child-connected work: work authorised by the school governing authority/provider of a school boarding services and performed by an adult in a school or school boarding premises environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

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 (ie indemnified) from action by others in the event of an injury or accident whilst they are performing volunteer school work in good faith.

POLICY

The VSL is committed to implementing and following practices which protect the safety and wellbeing of children and our staff and volunteers. Volunteers assisting the classroom teacher can be of great benefit in providing the best educational access. The VSL welcomes voluntary assistance from the community in the classroom where there is an identified need by the teacher.

Volunteers may also be considered to assist with student performances. The greatest participation, however is for the Voluntary Teacher Assistants (VTA) category.

The procedures set out below are designed to ensure that the Victorian School of Languages' 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 required to follow the VTAs Guidelines and forms.

Volunteers interested in assisting the school will approach the relevant Centre Supervisor who will process the request in consultation with the Area Manager and the respective teacher.

Suitability checks including Working with Children Clearances

Working with students

The VSL values the volunteers that assist our teachers in our classrooms/excursions/school concerts/other events and programs. To ensure that we are meeting our legal obligations under the *Worker Screening Act* and the Child Safe Standards, the VSL is required to undertake suitability checks which in most cases will involve asking for evidence of a Working with Children Clearance and may also involve undertaking reference, proof of identity, qualification and work history involving children checks.

Considering our legal obligations, and our commitment to ensuring that the VSL is a child safe environment, we will require volunteers to obtain a WWC Clearance and produce their valid card to the Centre Supervisor or Area Manager 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 Clearance 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, 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.

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, promotion of classes 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 WWC Clearances or other suitability checks as they are not engaged in child-related work and children are not generally present during these activities. However, the Victorian School of Languages reserves the right to undertake suitability checks, including requiring proof of identity and WWC Clearance, 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 code of conduct referred to in our Volunteer Induction Pack and ensure the actions and requirements in these documents are followed when volunteering for our school. They need to read the guidelines, complete the registration form and complete the [Child safe standard volunteer training module](#).

Depending on the nature and responsibilities of their role, the VSL may also require volunteers to complete additional child safety training. Volunteers will be provided a job description, where relevant.

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, our Statement of Values and School Philosophy and the VSL Voluntary Teacher Assistant guidelines.

Volunteer workers will also be expected to act consistently with Department of Education 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 and may determine at any time whether or not a person is suitable to volunteer at the VSL.

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 a Supervisor or Area Manager 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'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 www.vsl.vic.edu.au
- Included as a link in all invitations to prospective volunteers
- Included in our staff handbook/manual
- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request.

RELATED POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Victorian School of Languages 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](#)
- Victorian School of Languages Volunteers Induction Pack (available at VSL Centres)

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	March 2025
Consultation	School Council 19 March 2025
Approved by	Principal
Next Scheduled review date	2027



Victorian School of Languages

Voluntary Teacher Assistants (VTAs)

Introduction

Volunteers assisting the classroom teacher can be of great benefit in providing the best educational access. The VSL welcomes voluntary assistance from the community in the classroom where there is an identified need by the teacher. Volunteers may also be considered to assist with student performances. The greatest participation, however is for the Voluntary Teacher Assistants category.

The following guidelines and requirements have been developed by the school.

Copies of this document should be given to all VTAs and prospective VTAs and to all associated teachers. Supervisors should also discuss the role of the VTA with both teachers and VTAs. Note that the principal or the principal's nominee should give approval before any VTA begins in a centre or at the VSL head office. Area Managers must collect the VTA form from the volunteer, ensure a Working with Children Clearance is obtained, and provide a copy of the Volunteer form to the VSL Head Office (AP Staffing). All VTA's will complete an induction and be familiar with DET Child Safety Standards.

The role of the VTA and VSL requirements

1. VTAs are working in a voluntary and unpaid capacity.
2. VTAs are requested to register their attendance in the office each session in a book kept for that purpose. Registration should include name, address, telephone number and capacity (eg. parent of child). Supervisors should be aware at all times of who is in the building.
3. VTAs provide assistance with the consent and under the direct supervision of the classroom teacher or the librarian and under the overall supervision of the Centre Supervisor and the Area Manager, and ultimately the principal. In the case of classroom assistance, students must remain in the classroom with the teacher. VTAs should work in the same room as the classroom teacher or librarian.
4. Both the teacher and the VTAs need to be fully aware that the teacher assumes full responsibility for the class and students at all times.
5. Disciplinary matters are the responsibility of the classroom teacher.
6. VTAs also need to be aware of Department of Education guidelines in such matters as politics and religion and to be aware that government teachers (and by extension any other classroom workers or assistants) are not permitted to attempt to influence students in these matters.

Guidelines for Assistance with Classroom Programs

The way in which VTAs provide assistance needs to be clear. It is essential, to avoid misunderstanding, that the teacher specifically guides the VTA at all times in the tasks to be undertaken.

Some teachers, particularly at lower level, may wish to ask for volunteers for a parent roster. This can be particularly helpful in such activities as reading. Other examples of ways in which VTAs can provide assistance would be:

In the classroom

- helping students with writing and with class exercises
- practising conversation with students
- helping students with projects
- helping individuals or small groups in specific points of language usage
- helping with preparation of concerts
- helping with preparation of parent/teacher functions/meetings
- helping with use of information technology

In the library

- assisting with cataloguing of language collections
- assisting with preparation of class sets – covering and numbering
- assisting with preparation of overdue notices
- assisting in collection and collation of current literature for VCE resources.

Some parents or community members may not be available on Saturday mornings or at other times when classes are held but might be able to assist in such matters as the covering of books or the preparation of classroom materials at home. Such offers of assistance are also appreciated.



**VICTORIAN SCHOOL
OF LANGUAGES**

Voluntary Teacher Assistant Form (VTA)

Name of Centre: _____

New adult volunteers are asked to fill in the following information and return it to the Supervisor of the Centre before beginning their volunteering. (USE BLOCK LETTERS)

Surname: _____

Given Names: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Mobile ph: _____

Language (if applicable) _____

Area of assistance offered and preferred levels (eg. reading, conversation, covering library books, etc.):

Any medical conditions of which the school should be aware:

I will abide by the VSL Volunteer Policy and I understand that I am offering assistance in a voluntary capacity under supervision of the classroom teacher and I also agree to abide by Victorian School of Languages and Department of Education rules and codes of conduct.

Signatures:

Volunteer Assistant: _____

Centre Supervisor: _____

Area Manager: _____

Date: _____

NB

1. One copy of this Form is to be given to the Volunteer.
2. One copy to be kept at the Centre.
3. One copy to be forwarded to the VSL Head Office for School Council records by the Supervisor and/or Area Manager.
4. Volunteers must also obtain a Working with Children Clearance.