

# Working with Children Clearance Policy

## Rationale

In 2006, the Victorian Government introduced a new checking system to help protect children under 18 years of age from physical or sexual harm. The Working with Children Clearance (WWCC) creates a mandatory minimum checking standard across Victoria. The WWCC helps to keep children safe by preventing those who pose a risk to the safety of children from working with them, in either paid or volunteer work.

(See Appendix 1 for a Summary of Working with Children Protocol.)

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all persons over 18 engaged as workers, be they employees, contractors or volunteers (which includes clergy, other religious and Board members) associated with St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Primary School possess a WWCC unless they are deliberately excluded.

## Implementation

All persons over 18 engaged as workers, be they employees, contractors or volunteers (which includes clergy, other religious and Board members) associated with the school are required to possess a WWCC unless they are deliberately excluded. Those deliberately excluded are:

- Those with a statutory exclusion in all circumstances, that is, those with VIT registration, sworn police not under suspension, those under 18 years of age, and visitors.
- An 18 or 19 year old student volunteer where the volunteer work is at or has been organised by their educational institution.
- Those departing from the workplace prior to the expiration of the lodgement window.
- At the discretion of the employer and applied in a common sense manner with a focus on risk:
  - Those who have applied for a WWCC but have yet to receive a Notice.
  - Those working for organisations using the school facilities and those working on the school site engaged by other contractors
  - Those undertaking other categories of work that do not involve children, for no more than 5 working days (or part thereof) in a calendar year.
  - A volunteer with an exemption under the Act engaged in work that involves children for no more than 5 working days (or part thereof) in a calendar year.
- The Principal and/or delegate will inform workers who need to have a WWCC, the details of the person and their WWCC are verified within the SAM4SCHOOLS online database that they are compliant. Should this be the first time they are engaged by the school then follow the Working with Children Clearance Procedure.
- An online check is completed with the Department of Justice by the school before a visitor who does not fit the category of worker can leave reception.

- For workers who visit regularly and have already been uploaded to the SAM4SCHOOLS online database, administration to verify that the person is still **Compliant**.
- All visitors and volunteers within the school must be able to produce their WWCC while on the school premises and wear a lanyard. This may not apply to contractors as it may be a work hazard.
- Should a visitor be attending the school for a meeting with staff only and not engaging in child-related work then they will not be required to have a WWCC ie. Contractor tendering for work, parent attending a PSG etc
- A term report is printed from the administration package showing **staff** WWCC expiry dates. Staff whose cards are due to expire are sent an email by the Principal's delegate to remind them to renew.
- Regular checks are done of all WWCC for volunteers and visitors to the school by the SAM4SCHOOLS database.
- An email is sent by SAM4SCHOOLS to those whose cards are about to expire, if they do not renew them then the database will mark them as **Not Compliant**.
- Visitors/Volunteers cannot work within the school until they are Compliant and inducted into the school's Child Safety program.
- When receiving a WWCC card with no accompanying notification from the Department, an online check is made through the WWCC website to verify the validation of the card.

## Evaluation

Effective July 2022

Reviewed March 2025

Review March 2026

To be used in conjunction with the Visitor and Volunteer Policy, VIT Procedure and Working with Children Clearance Procedure.

## Appendix 1

### Summary of the Working with Children Protocol as it relates to parish and school settings

1. The Working with Children Act, a scheme that the Government promotes as designed to create minimum standards across Victoria for those who work with children (ie those under 18), has already been enacted and is being phased in over 5 years. It involves:

- (a) the screening of those in child related work for convictions, findings of guilt, pending charges and offences against this and other Acts, as well as professional disciplinary records. It is distinct from and wider reaching than a Criminal Records Check.
- (b) continuous monitoring and the triggering of reassessments should circumstances change, and
- (c) the issue of an assessment notice declaring one 'not unsuitable' and the entitlement to undertake child related work. It is valid for 5 years. There is no cost to volunteers. The fee for employees and contractors is \$70.

2. The Diocese has opted for blanket coverage of adults working in parishes including school settings with very limited exceptions. The test, under this policy as to whether a person needs a Working with Children Check is as follows:

- (a) Is the person a worker?
- (b) Is the organisation conducting the service associated with the parish/school?
- (c) If so, does a deliberately excluded policy exemption apply to the person?

3. A worker is either an employee contractor, volunteer and includes clergy, other religious and Board member. Other participants are not workers.

4. Associated with a parish or school means any one of the following:

- (a) Auspice activities conducted on parish/school premises.
- (b) Auspice activities not conducted on parish/school premises but involving children.
- (c) Organisations which are not auspice by the parish/school which use parish/school facilities. Agreement to the protocol is a condition of their continued use of the facility.
- (d) Organisations which are not auspice by the parish/school which use its name or where the Parish Priest or Principal is part of the managing body and children are involved. Agreement to the protocol is a condition of their continued use of the name or ongoing membership.
- (e) Other organisations which the employer determines may be seen as a parish activity should an adverse circumstance arise. The protocol does not apply to building sites where the builder has taken site possession for the duration of the building works.

5. Those deliberately excluded are:

(a) Those with a statutory exclusion in all circumstances, ie registered teachers, sworn police not under suspension, those under 18 years of age, and visitors.

(b) An 18 or 19 year old student volunteer where the volunteer work is at or has been organised by their educational institution.

(c) At the discretion of the employer:

- Those who have applied for a WWCC but have yet to receive a Notice.
- Those undertaking certain categories of work as set out in the protocol, eg lectors, and thanksgiving counters.
- Those undertaking other categories of work that do not involve children, for no more than 5 working days (or part thereof) in a calendar year.
- A volunteer with an exemption under the Act engaged in work that involves children for no more than 5 working days (or part thereof) in a calendar year.

