

Volunteers Policy

Ratification Date: Update by RNS Principal 02/2023 RNS Board 15/03/2023	Next Review: By 1 July 2024 or after an event or changes to the minimum standards as advised by the VRQA	Availability: <table><tr><td>Web</td><td>X</td></tr><tr><td>Office</td><td>X</td></tr><tr><td>On Request</td><td>X</td></tr></table>	Web	X	Office	X	On Request	X	Actions:
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SCHOOL CONTEXT

River Nile School (RNS) is a specialist reengagement senior-secondary school for young women who are Humanitarian refugees and new arrivals to Australia. In general, our school's students are highly vulnerable with backgrounds of complex trauma in their lives. Most RNS students live as independent young adults, and those with parents/carers commonly have parents/carers who are also new to Australia, with low levels of English oracy and literacy and which are not yet well informed about child safety expectations and obligations in Australia. Some RNS students have significant responsibilities as young parents or carers/guardians of younger siblings.

PURPOSE

To outline the processes that River Nile School 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 board/council
- Any activity carried out for the welfare of a school, by the school board/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 board/council
- Providing assistance in the work of any school or kindergarten
- Attending meetings in relation to 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.

POLICY

River Nile School is committed to implementing and following practices which protect the safety and wellbeing of children/students and our staff and volunteers. Prior to becoming the River Nile School in 2017, we began our journey as the River Nile Learning Centre which was very much a volunteer-led and run organisation. Without the generosity, expertise, wisdom and compassion of our volunteers in our years prior to becoming a school, we would not exist. Many people, from all ages and walks of life feel they want to give back to the community. They volunteer because they have time and skills they want to share. Our volunteers include:

- Non-executive members of the RNS Board
- In-class learning support volunteers, who typically give one morning from 10 am to 1 pm most weeks, in a class under the direction and supervision of the teacher.
- Welfare and material aid volunteers, who typically work separated from students with collecting and sort food and material aid and donations.
- People who contribute as part of a specific project or program for a defined period.

The procedures set out below are designed to ensure that River Nile School's volunteers are suitable to work with our children/students and are well-placed to make a positive contribution to our school community.

Becoming a volunteer

Members of our school community, and the broader community, who would like to volunteer are encouraged make contact initially via email to admin@rivernileschool.vic.edu.au and provide their:

- Resume, detailing key personal information, experience and qualifications
- VIT registration or Working with Children Check (WwCC) number and expiry date, if they already have one, or confirming they will apply to obtain a WwCC, if deemed suitable to volunteer at RNS, and prior to commencing any volunteering.
- Names and contact details for two referees. Volunteers well known to or recommended by professional staff or Board member(s), may use that connection.

COVID-19 vaccination information

Our school follows Department of Education and Training policy with respect to the requirements relating to attendance on school sites and COVID-19 vaccinations.

For further information, refer to: [COVID-19 Vaccinations – Visitors and Volunteers on School Sites](#)

Suitability checks including Working with Children Check Clearances

Working with students

River Nile School values the volunteers that assist with in-class learning support, or occasional with other programs involving child-related activities to support student learning and development.

To ensure that we are meeting our legal obligations under the *Worker Screening Act* and the Child Safe Standards, River Nile School is required to undertake suitability checks which in most cases will involve asking for evidence of a Working with Children Check (WwCC) Clearance. Additional suitability checks may also be required depending on the volunteer role, such as reference, proof of identity, qualification and work history involving children checks.

Where prospective volunteers are required under the law and this policy to have a WwCC Clearance, the principal has the discretion to accept evidence of a WwCC check application in order to commence volunteer work, provided the volunteer provides the school with evidence of the application outcome (clearance or exclusion) as soon as practicable after the applicant receives it.

Considering our legal obligations, and our commitment to ensuring that River Nile School is a child safe environment, we will require volunteers to obtain a WwCC Clearance and produce their valid card to the Principal, Assistant Principal, Child-Safe Champion or Engagement Coordinator for verification in the following circumstances:

- **Volunteers who are not parent/family members** of any student at the school 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, 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
- **Parent/community School Board members** sitting on the RNS Board, regardless of whether their own child is a student member 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, volunteering on the weekend for gardening, maintenance, working bees, participating in sub-committees of the school Board, fundraising groups that meet in the evenings during which children will not be, or would not reasonably be expected to be, present.

At River Nile School, volunteers for this type of work will still be required to provide a valid WwCC Clearance, proof of ID, references and/or work history.

School Board members and volunteers on any sub-committee of the School Board will be asked to provide evidence of a valid WwCC Clearance. Whilst we acknowledge that these volunteers will not be engaging in child-related work as part of their role, even if there is a student sitting on the School Board, 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 WwCC Clearance. School Board candidates are also subject to reference checks prior to any appointment being confirmed.

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 reasonable likely to be present, volunteers must familiarise themselves with the policies, procedures and code of conduct referred to in our Child Safety Volunteer Induction Pack and ensure the actions and requirements in these documents are followed when volunteering for our school.

Depending on the nature and responsibilities of their role, River Nile School may also require volunteers to complete additional child safety training.

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 and our Statement of Values and School Philosophy.

Volunteer workers will also be expected to act consistently with both River Nile School and Department of Education and Training policies, to the extent that they apply to volunteer workers, including the policies relating to Diversity and Inclusion, which includes Equal Opportunity and Sexual Harassment, Bullying Prevention, Privacy and Occupational Health and Safety.

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 children/students.

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 River Nile School.

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 River Nile School's Privacy Policy (available at: <http://www.rivernileschool.vic.edu.au/policies>) and the Department of Education and Training'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 the Principal, Assistant Principal or Business Manager to ensure they are managed in accordance with school procedures.

Compensation

Personal injury: Volunteer workers are covered by the River Nile School's Voluntary Workers' Personal Accident Insurance 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 Principal (or delegate) may authorise such compensation as they consider reasonable in the circumstances. Claims of this nature should be directed to the principal.

Public liability insurance: The River Nile School'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
- Included in induction processes for volunteers and relevant staff

RELATED POLICIES AND RESOURCES

River Nile School policies and resources relevant to this policy include:

- *Statement of Values and School Philosophy*
- *Visitors Policy, Child Safety Policy*
- *Child Safety Code of Conduct*
- *Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures*
- *Inclusion and Diversity Policy*
- *Child Safety – Volunteer Induction Pack*

These are available publicly on the RNS website at this link:
<http://www.rivernileschool.vic.edu.au/policies>

Department of Education and Training 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](#)

The River Nile School Inc.

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