



VILLANOVA COLLEGE

HANDBOOK FOR
VOLUNTEERS



Introduction

Research has shown that parents who take an active role in their child's education increase their child's ability to learn and have a positive effect on academic achievement.

At Villanova College we encourage parents to actively support student learning by becoming involved in a range of College activities and greatly appreciate the parents and members of our community who assist and support us.

Our aim is to give students the sense of feeling safe, being safe and valued as people so that they are secure and ready to learn at their best. As a volunteer you play a significant role in the work of the College, form part of the College community and assist in providing the optimal learning environment for students.

This booklet is designed to provide you with some important information you will need to know while you are volunteering at Villanova College. Please read the booklet carefully and ensure that you are both comfortable and familiar with its contents.

Code of Conduct

At Villanova College we have high expectations of our parent community. We expect all parent volunteers will:

- Obtain a Working with Children Check (Blue Card) and provide the College with a record of same
- Promote a positive attitude towards learning
- Support College decisions regarding behaviour management
- Ensure all interactions are respectful and appropriate language is used at all times
- Sign in when on College grounds
- Wear appropriate clothing for anticipated role and activities
- Only volunteer at the College if they are fit and healthy to do so. Should they become unwell while on College grounds, they must advise their staff supervisor immediately
- Contact the College if they have a question or are unsure of something

Emergency Procedures

The College is committed to ensuring the safety, health and wellbeing of its staff, students, parents, volunteers and visitors. The College has emergency and security management systems in place. As a volunteer it is your responsibility to familiarise yourself with the College's emergency procedures.

A summary of emergency procedures and evacuation plans are located within buildings within Villanova College.

Child protection is everyone's business

As adults we all have a responsibility to care for children and young people and to protect them from all forms of harm as well as to positively promote their wellbeing.

Villanova College seeks to continue its adherence to legislative requirements, policy directives and duty of care to students by a commitment to the implementation of student protection strategies and processes.



What is child abuse?

The term 'abuse' has been replaced in recent state legislation with the term 'harm'. Child 'abuse' is any act, or failure to act, that leads to the 'harm' of a child or young person. It can be better understood by thinking that 'abuse' is the action and 'harm' is the consequence.

The legal definition of 'harm'

In Queensland 'harm' is legally defined as:

- Harm to a child is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional well-being.
- It is immaterial how the harm is caused.
- Harm can be caused by:
 - physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect:
 - or sexual abuse or exploitation'.
- Harm can be caused by –
 - a single act, omission or circumstance; or
 - a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances.

Sources of harm to a student are:

- Harm to a student by a staff member, other employee or volunteer
- Harm to a student by a person who is not an employee or agent of the College or another student
- Harm by another student
- Self-harm by a student.

Forming a suspicion about harm

A volunteer may form a suspicion that a student may have experienced, is experiencing or is at an unacceptable risk of experiencing harm when:

- a student reports or discloses information of concern about him/her or about another person's behaviour
- another student reports or discloses information of concern about a student or about another person's behaviour in relation to that student
- a parent or another person reports information of concern about a student and/or another person's behaviour (This information may come from a relative, friend, acquaintance of the student, or sometimes could be anonymous)
- relevant observations (appearance, behaviours, and situations) are witnessed, or other relevant firsthand knowledge is gained.

What is a 'disclosure' of harm?

College personnel are often the first people students may tell when they are feeling unsafe. Sometimes a student may approach you and tell you about their experience of being harmed. This is described as a 'disclosure'.

It is important for volunteers to be aware of how children/young people disclose and how to respond in the most appropriate manner. If a student speaks to you about a concern, you need to be prepared so that you can be supportive of the student and clear about your own responsibility at the same time.



If a student tells you about being harmed or being at risk of harm

DO:

- listen attentively, actively and non-judgementally
- let the child use their own words
- respond calmly to the information the student provides
- only question the student if absolutely necessary and restrict yourself to questions such as, 'Tell me what happened, and/or 'Tell me more about that'
- reassure the student that they have done the right thing to tell e.g. 'I am pleased you have told me these things'
- reassure them they are not to blame for the behaviours of others
- provide pastoral support to the student and be aware of the privacy issues involved
- be honest about your responsibility for taking action
- pass the information onto the Principal or the College's nominated Student Protection Contact (SPC) immediately
- make detailed notes

If a student tells you about being harmed or being at risk of harm

DO NOT:

- react emotionally or accuse
- seek any more information than is absolutely necessary
- ask leading or probing questions or put words in the student's mouth
- make promises that you cannot keep – particularly about not telling others such as the Principal or other SPC about the information
- leave the student alone immediately after a disclosure
- discuss the situation with parents, caregivers or others (other than those designated e.g. Principal, or other SPC).

Who are the Student Protection Contacts at Villanova College?

The Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2001 requires non-State schools in Queensland to nominate at least two staff members to whom students can report concerns.

At Villanova College the Principal is nominated as one SPC and the Principal must also nominate at least one other staff member to be the College's other SPC. Students, staff, parents and others can report to the Principal or other SPC if they have concerns for students.



The Villanova College Student Protection Contacts are:

Mr Mark Stower, Principal

Mr Steven Bremner, Deputy Principal

Mr Matt Levander, Head of Senior School

Mr Greg O'Neill, Head of Middle School

Mr Stephen Rouhliadoff, Head of Junior School

Mr Tass Sakellariou, College Psychologist

Dr Ashleigh Wright, College Psychologist

Mr Adrian Hellwig, College Counsellor

Ms Hannah Elder, Teacher

Your reporting responsibilities as a volunteer

In your role as a volunteer at Villanova College if in any instance:

- you form a reasonable suspicion that a student may have experienced, is experiencing or is at an unacceptable risk of experiencing significant harm you must report this as soon as possible to the Principal or other SPC
- please check with the College Principal about whom you are to report to if you have concerns about a student.

Confidentiality

Remember it is VITAL to maintain appropriate confidentiality for the protection of all involved.

What happens next?

Once you have reported the suspected harm of a student, the Principal or the SPC will do whatever is necessary to make sure the student is safe.

You can rest assured that your report will be taken seriously, dealt with immediately and reported to the appropriate State authorities where necessary.

Case Scenarios

Here are some scenarios for your consideration

Scenario 1

You work as a volunteer in the tuckshop. You notice a year 2 girl has a large bruise around her eye and she tells you that she had been hit by her mother. You know her mother well. Do you need to report this?

Scenario 2

You are a volunteer who assists with helping students to read. Another volunteer is working nearby with a student. You observe that the volunteer appears angry, is raising her voice at the student, poking the student on the shoulder. You have worked with this volunteer all year and usually have morning tea with her. Do you need to report this?

Scenario 3

You are a volunteer and assist with the school's year 8 netball team. You notice that a female student in the team has cuts on her arms and on her legs. You enquire about the cuts and she tells you she did it to herself because she felt unhappy. Do you need to report this?



Scenario 4

You are a volunteer parent assisting school staff take the year six class on an excursion. On the bus one of the year 6 girls tells you that one of the boys has been acting in a sexually inappropriate manner at the back of the bus. The male student is the son of a friend with whom you talk with regularly. Do you need to report this?

Answers to scenarios:

Yes, each of these situations must be reported to the Principal or SPC.

Remember you do NOT have to be sure that a student has been harmed to report – you just need to have a concern.

Very Important Note

If you have been involved in a student protection matter in your role as a volunteer at Villanova College, be aware of your own reactions and seek support if required. The Principal can assist you if required.

References and Resources

More information on student protection at Villanova College can be found in the following documents which can be accessed on the Villanova College website: www.vnc.qld.edu.au

- Student Protection Policy
- Student Protection Processes
- Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy
- Charter of Commitment to Children and Young People
- State of Commitment
- National Catholic Safeguarding Standards
- Alleged Inappropriate Behaviour Towards a Student O Reporting Form
- Student Protection Report
- Disputes and Complaints Against Members of the Villanova College Community
- Staff Recruitment and Selection Guidelines
- Whistleblower Policy and Procedures
- Villanova College Privacy Policy

Volunteer Confidentiality

Villanova College is bound by the Australian Privacy Principles contained in the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988 as amended (the Privacy Act). The College accepts its obligations to comply with the requirements of the Australian Privacy Principles contained in the Privacy Act and is committed to protecting the privacy of all its employees, students, parents, those contracted to perform work on its behalf and volunteers.

At Villanova College, there are instances in which confidential information is discussed in order to better understand students and how we can help them. When working at the College as a volunteer there may be times when this information is overheard. Our staff will make every effort to prevent this from happening; however, as a volunteer you must agree that if you do hear information, about a student or family you will not repeat this outside of the College. This will ensure the protection of our students' interest and their families, thus creating a better environment for all.



As a volunteer:

- I will keep confidential matters private.
- I also understand that volunteering at Villanova College is a privilege and not a right. The College Principal or his delegate reserves the right to deny or remove any volunteer violating confidentiality.

Any questions are to be directed to the Compliance Officer, Mrs Kathryn Hackett -
khackett@vnc.qld.edu.au

Thank you - Villanova College thanks you for your support of our College and community.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

By signing this agreement, I am stating that I will not divulge information about any Villanova College student or family at any time. I also acknowledge that I have read and understood the Villanova College Handbook for Volunteers.

Name (please print) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

This signed acknowledgement will be retained on file at Villanova College.