



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 and volunteer community. We expect all volunteers will:

- Obtain a Working with Children Check (Blue Card) and provide the College with a record of same (if not a current parent)
- Complete required online Student Protection and Privacy training
- 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

Blue Cards

Under current legislation, current parents of the College are not required to hold a Blue Card. All other volunteers must hold a current Blue Card prior to commencing any work at Villanova College. Blue Cards must be linked to Villanova College. Further information can be obtained from the Villanova College HR Officer on 3394 5511.

The No Card, No Start legislation commenced on 31 August 2020.

It is an offence for a *restricted person* to start or continue working or volunteering in restricted employment. For further details, please refer to the Queensland Government, Blue Card Services website.



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.

The Queensland Parliament has implemented recommendations made in the Criminal Justice Report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse by introducing two new criminal offences that impose a positive duty on third parties to act in relation to child sexual abuse. The Criminal Code (Child Sexual Offences Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020 (Qld) amends the Criminal Code Act 1899 (Qld) (Criminal Code) and includes the new offences of: "Failure to protect child from child sexual offence" under section 229BB (Failure to Protect) "Failure to report belief of child sexual offence committed in relation to a child" under section 229BC (Failure to Report).

These offences commenced operation on 5 July 2021, and will apply to certain people in Queensland, including people who work in government and non-government schools.

Failure to Protect

Under section 229BB of the Criminal Code, an adult (aged 18 or over) who is associated with an institution, including a school, (whether as an employee, contractor, volunteer or otherwise) will commit a criminal offence if they:

know that there is a significant risk that another adult associated with the institution:

- will commit a child sexual offence
- in relation to a child (under 16 years of age, or 16 or 17 years of age but with impairment of the mind) under the care, supervision or control of the institution; and
- have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk; and
- wilfully or negligently fail to reduce or remove the risk.

In the school context, all staff members (whether teaching or non-teaching), members of the school's governing body, volunteers and contractors are considered to be "associated with" the school.

Therefore, this offence means that action **must** be taken:

- by any staff, volunteer or contractor who has the power or responsibility to do so to protect students aged under 16, or students under 18 years of age with impairment of the mind from a known significant risk of sexual abuse that is posed by an adult staff member, volunteer or contractor at the school.

Whether a staff member, volunteer or contractor at the school has "power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk" to the student will depend on their role at the school and on the source of the risk.

In a normal school context, the principal and members of the school's leadership or management team would **always** have the necessary degree of supervision, power and responsibility to remove or reduce a risk posed by another adult working at the school. However, on a day-to-day basis, and on tours, excursions, or camps, others at a school may have the requisite power and responsibility.

Appropriate action that can be taken to protect students from a significant risk of a child sexual offence or a reasonably foreseeable risk of harm may include, for example:

- a current staff member, volunteer or contractor, who has direct contact with and is known to pose a risk of physical abuse to students, being immediately removed from contact with students and reported to external authorities
- a parent who is known to pose a risk of sexual abuse to students not being allowed to attend excursions as a parent helper.



The maximum penalty for this offence is five years imprisonment.

Failure to Report

Under section 229BC of the Criminal Code, any adult who gains information that causes the adult to believe on reasonable grounds, or that ought reasonably to cause the adult to believe, that a child sexual offence is being or has been committed against a child by another adult; and at the relevant time, the child is or was: under 16 years; or a person with an impairment of the mind must disclose the information to a police officer as soon as reasonably practicable after the belief is, or ought to reasonably to have been, formed. Failure to report this information to the Police without reasonable excuse is a criminal offence and carries a maximum prison term of three years imprisonment.

This obligation to report child sexual offences to the Police applies to **everyone** in Queensland aged 18 years or over, including all staff, volunteers, contractors and students aged 18 and over at a school.

The offence will not apply if the adult has a reasonable excuse for not reporting the information. Under the Criminal Code, a reasonable excuse includes:

- believing, on reasonable grounds, that the information has already been disclosed to a police officer
- making a mandatory report to Police or Child Safety Services under mandatory reporting laws or believing on reasonable grounds that another person has done so
- gaining the information after the alleged victim becomes an adult, and reasonably believing that the alleged victim does not want the information to be disclosed to a police officer
- having a reasonable belief that disclosing the information to a police officer would endanger your safety or the safety of another person, other than the alleged offender, regardless of whether the belief arises because of the fact of the disclosure or the information disclosed, and the failure to disclose the information to a police officer is a reasonable response in the circumstances.

Unacceptable reasons for not reporting include if you are concerned about the interests (including the reputation, legal liability or financial status) of:

- the person who may have committed a child sexual offence
- any organisation (such as a school).

Information gained by an adult during, or in connection with, a religious confession is not excluded from information that must be reported to Police.

The list of child sexual offences that are captured by the Failure to Report offence is extensive. It includes sexual offences such as rape, sexual abuse, sexual touching, the production of child abuse material, voyeurism and grooming offences or attempts to commit those offences.

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

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 5 student with a large bruise around his eye and he tells you that he had been hit by her mother. You know his 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 football team. You notice that a student in the team has cuts on his arms and on his legs. You enquire about the cuts, and he tells you he did it to himself because he felt unhappy. Do you need to report this?

Scenario 4

You are a volunteer parent assisting school staff take the Year 6 class on an excursion. On the bus one of the Year 6 students tells you that another student has been acting in a sexually inappropriate manner at the back of the bus. This 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 0 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.**



Online Student Protection and Privacy Training

All volunteers at Villanova College are to complete online Student Protection and Privacy training. This training is available via the CompliLearn Online System which is overseen by the Compliance Officer.

Any questions are to be directed to the Compliance Officer, Mrs Kathryn Hackett - khackett@vnc.qld.edu.au or 3394 5501.

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.