



## School Community Work (Volunteer) Policy

### Introduction

Plenty River College (the College) is an independent, specialist senior secondary school, delivering the Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC) and VCE Vocational Major (VM). It provides a safe and inclusive learning environment for young people aged 15-20 years who may have been disengaged or are at risk of disengaging from education.

Plenty River College is a school of opportunities in which all students are empowered to achieve their personal best. Our mission is to assist students to develop life and work skills and achieve in their learning by:

- re-engaging them in education;
- fostering their social and emotional development; and
- providing a supportive and safe environment for them.

### Purpose

This policy sets out the requirements for students undertaking school community work.

### Scope

This policy applies to Teachers, Pathways Coordinator, Administration Staff, Principal, students, parents/guardians.

### Summary

- Students may participate in school community work, if it is on a voluntary basis.
- Students must not receive any remuneration or reward for this work.
- The community must directly benefit from the school community work.
- Staff must follow the guidance on school community work provided by the Department of Education including use of the relevant arrangement forms to ensure any arrangements meet legislative and this policy requirements.

### Definitions

<b>School community work</b>	Community work undertaken by a student which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• supports their learning and career development</li> <li>• directly benefits the community</li> <li>• is organised by the school, and</li> <li>• is approved by the principal as school community work</li> </ul>
<b>Child Safe Standards</b>	Victoria’s compulsory minimum standards for organisations which provide services for children, including Victorian schools, to help ensure the safety of children. The standards are part of the Victorian Government’s response to the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry.

<b>Duty of care</b>	<p>A non-delegable, moral and legal obligation to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students.</p> <p>Duty of care is both an organisational and an individual responsibility, meaning that it applies to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the College as a legal entity; and</li> <li>• College Board members, staff, volunteers, contractors, and visitors who have an individual responsibility to students.</li> </ul>
<b>Ministerial Order 55 – Structured Workplace Learning Arrangements</b>	<p>This provides the operational framework for the delivery of structured workplace learning in Victorian secondary schools.</p>

## Details

School community work/volunteering work is community work undertaken by students which:

- supports students' learning and career development
- directly benefits the community
- is organised by the school
- is approved by the principal of the school as school community work

Students must undertake school community work voluntarily and they must not receive any remuneration or reward for this work.

Prior to commencing school community work, the student should successfully complete safe@work program relevant to the industry in which they are placed and have been given appropriate information on workplace discrimination, bullying and harassment by the host organisation .

## Child Safe Standards

To create and maintain a child safe organisation, PRC must comply with Ministerial Order 1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools (PDF).

The Child Safe Standards require PRC to develop and implement risk management strategies to ensure students' safety in the school environment, which includes the school community work environment.

## Duty of care and school community work

PRC has a duty of care to take reasonable steps to protect students from any reasonably foreseeable injury. This duty extends beyond the College grounds to include school-approved activities such as school community work.

The principal is responsible for managing the risks of school community work. Schools must take all reasonable steps to ensure that volunteer student workers are safe when participating in with host organisations.

## Assessment of a host organisation's suitability

In its duty of care to its students, PRC must be satisfied that the host organisation will provide a safe and suitable workplace for its students.

Under Victorian Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) legislation and standards, employers must provide and maintain a safe working environment for their employees and volunteers. More information is available at the WorkSafe Victoria website.

PRC must be satisfied that the host organisation understands OHS legislation and standards and complies with them to make sure students are safe when doing school community work.

The school must ensure that the host organisation does the following:

- complete the Risk Assessment Form for school community work before the start of the placement
- identify and control the risks/hazards in the students' work environment and document how this is being done
- complete the relevant section of the College Arrangement Form for school community work.

PRC will work with the host organisation, where reasonably practicable, to ensure that risks are reduced — for example by:

- providing relevant information about the students
- having students complete an OHS program (safe@work) prior to the placement.

PRC must review the completed Risk Assessment Form for school community work with the host organisation and be satisfied that risk management strategies will be implemented to control any identified hazards and potential risks before approving the placement. The principal must sign the form and keep it at the school for a minimum of 7 years.

### **Assessment of the host organisation's induction and supervision arrangements**

PRC must make sure that the host organisation will:

- give the student an induction to the organisation and the workplace.
- provide a competent supervisor who will appropriately supervise the student to make sure the student does the tasks safely, and
- make sure that staff members supervising the student has a valid Working with Children Check where the student is under 18 years of age, and
- give a copy of all required Working with Children Checks to the school before the placement begins.

### **Appropriateness of tasks and settings**

PRC must ensure that the tasks and settings of a particular school community work are appropriate for the student and unlikely to harm the student's health, safety, moral or material welfare or development. In doing so, the school should consider:

- the student's age, maturity, competency, and physical and emotional development
- the nature and management of the school community work or activity
- the nature and environment of the workplace where the school community work is to be performed.

For example, the following types of work or activities are likely to harm a student's health or safety unless the risk of harm is managed or minimised:

- repetitive bending, twisting or lifting.

- manual lifting of heavy items
- working with or near cooking equipment, or any other equipment that involves unsafe temperatures.
- working with sharp instruments, power-operated tools or other dangerous equipment
- working near moving vehicles
- working at heights
- working with uncontrolled animals
- working in extreme weather conditions

For more information about age-appropriate tasks and settings for volunteer student workers, refer to Work Experience Policy.

In addition, the Child Employment Act 2003 (Vic) prohibits the employment of a child:

- in door-to-door selling
- on a fishing boat, other than a boat operating on inland waters.
- on a building or construction site — whether commercial or residential, at any time before the buildings on the site are at lock-up stage.

Regardless of whether or not the student volunteer is covered by the Child Employment Act, students must not undertake these activities when participating in school community work.

#### **Hours and duration of school community work**

- (i) School community work should be undertaken within the school term dates .
- (ii) It should also be undertaken within school hours.

The duration of school community work must be approved by the principal and should not affect the student’s schoolwork, health, safety or welfare.

#### **Contact person during school community work**

The Teacher or the Pathways Coordinator will be available by telephone while the school community work is taking place. The nominated staff will be responsible for managing any issues that arise — including issues that may require termination of school community work.

#### **Work Experience Logbook.**

Students undertaking a VET program with the College and intends to use the school community work as part of their VET experience hours must also complete the Work Experience Logbook.

<b>Related Policies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structured Workplace Learning Policy</li> <li>• Work Experience Policy</li> <li>• OHS Policy</li> <li>• Child Safe Policy</li> <li>• Complaints and Grievance Policy</li> </ul>
<b>Relevant Legislation</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)</li> <li>• Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017</li> </ul>

- Ministerial Order 1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools
- Child Employment Act 2003 (Vic)

#### **Relevant Documents**

- College Arrangement Form for School Community Work
- Risk Assessment Form for Community Work
- A host organisation’s guide to assessing risks for school community work