Volunteers at St Stephen’s

Volunteers, be they parents or friends of St Stephen’s School, are very welcome and are a critical part of daily school life. Volunteering in classrooms, the Curlew Café, P&F, School Board, working bees, Spring Fairs, or many other volunteer roles, enhances the quality of teaching and learning that we provide.

Due to a legislative requirement, it is now mandatory that all volunteers (including parents of St Stephen’s students) undergo student protection training. We have developed a training process as outlined by Brisbane Catholic Education to facilitate this process. This process includes a short in-service where-by you will be asked to sign the appropriate paperwork to indicate that you have received the mandated information. The format of this in-service is outlined below:

- **Welcome and greeting**
- **School volunteer registration sheet**
- **Blue card system information**
- **Statement of principles for employment in Catholic schools**
- **Volunteer Code of Conduct**
- **Volunteer Suitability Declaration**
- **Volunteer Student Protection Information**
- **Volunteer Work Place Health and Safety Outline**

After the completion of this in-service, your name will be added to a St Stephen’s volunteer register. Hence, you need to participate in this process only once, regardless of the various volunteer activities in which you may engage.

If you wish to continue your volunteer work in future years you will be invited to attend a refresher session; however, this session would not be compulsory.

Regards

Phillip Manitta
SCHOOL VOLUNTEER REGISTRATION

Surname: First Name:

Date of Birth: Contact Number:

Address:

City/Suburb: Post Code:

Date Mandatory Student Protection training received:

[Volunteers other than parents of enrolled students]

Positive Notice Blue Card Registration Number: Expiry Date:

NB: A COPY OF THE CURRENT POSITIVE NOTICE MUST BE ATTACHED TO THIS FORM.

Important Information:
I understand that I must follow the schools visitor procedures and sign in and out at the front desk on all occasions.

I have been provided with a copy of;
☐ The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian’s Information Sheet titled The Blue Card (attached)
☐ Brisbane Catholic Education’s Statement of Principles (attached)
☐ The Volunteer Code of Conduct (attached)
☐ Brisbane Catholic Education’s Volunteer Suitability Declaration (to be signed)
☐ The Student Protection Handbook for Volunteers (to be signed)
☐ The School Volunteer Register sheet for Workplace, Health and Safety (to be signed)

I __________________________ have read and understand the above.

Signed: Date:
The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian (the Commission) promotes and protects the rights, interests and wellbeing of children and young people in Queensland.

**Do I need a blue card or an exemption card?**

- The blue card system regulates services or activities that are directed to, or mainly involve, children. People who carry out work that is covered by a category of the Commission’s Act will require a blue card.

- The categories of regulated employment and business are outlined on the Commission’s website and includes information about any possible exemptions that might apply to individuals.

- If you are a police officer or registered teacher, you do not require a blue card but should apply to the Commission for an exemption card if you are providing regulated child-related services outside of your professional duties. More information on exemption cards is available on the Commission’s website.

The following table is to be used as a guide only. For detailed information about when a blue card or exemption card is required, visit the Commission’s website at [www.bluecard.qld.gov.au](http://www.bluecard.qld.gov.au) or call the Blue Card Contact Centre on **07 3211 6999 or 1800 113 611** (freecall).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of activity</th>
<th>Who may need a blue card/exemption card</th>
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| **Working or volunteering in a school** | People providing services or conducting activities mainly directed towards children. For example:  
- teacher aides  
- classroom volunteers (except parents/guardians)  
- school administration staff  
- school cleaners  
- tuckshop/canteen staff  
- students doing a practical placement as part of a course with an education provider |  
- Approved or registered teachers (even if they are working outside their professional capacity at the school)  
- Parents/guardians volunteering at a school where their child attends (even if going on excursions or overnight camps)  
- Volunteers under the age of 18 years who are undertaking work experience to sample employment but who are not undertaking a practical placement  
- Registered health practitioners performing health services to children that are relevant to their professional registration e.g. a nurse providing immunisations  
- Builders, electricians, plumbers or construction workers  
- Guest lecturers who attend a school less than twice a year to give talks to students and who are supervised by another adult while in the school |
| ✓ Schools – employees other than teachers and parents category | | |
| **Working or volunteering inside a boarding facility at a school** | People whose work includes or is likely to include, working inside a boarding facility at a school, even if it is not directed towards children due to the increased opportunity for people to have direct and unsupervised contact with children residing in the boarding facility. For example:  
- boarding masters and mistresses  
- boarding facility kitchen and catering staff  
- builders, electricians, plumbers or construction workers undertaking work inside a boarding school |  
- Approved or registered teachers (even if they are working outside their professional capacity).  
- Volunteers under the age of 18 years who are not undertaking a practical placement  
- Registered health practitioners performing health services to children that are relevant to their professional registration e.g. a doctor coming into the boarding facility to provide medical treatment |  
- Schools – boarding facilities category | | |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Who does not need a blue card/exemption card</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Participating in a Parents & Citizens (P&C) Association  | • A P&C officer holder (including parents of a child attending the school and registered teachers)  
• A P&C ordinary member who volunteers at the child care service who does not have a child which regularly attends the child care service | • A P&C ordinary member who does not volunteer or work in the child care service  
• A P&C ordinary member who volunteers in the child care service and whose child regularly attends the child care service |
| - which does operate an out of school hours child care program | | |
| ☑ Child care category | | |
| Participating in a Parents & Citizens (P&C) Association  | • A P&C ordinary member or officer holder who is not a parent of a child attending the school and who is not an approved or registered teacher | • A P&C ordinary member or officer holder who is a parent of a child attending the school  
• A P&C ordinary member or officer holder who is an approved or registered teacher |
| - which does not operate an out of school hours child care program | | |
| ☑ Schools – employees other than teachers and parents category | | |
| Participating in a home stay program organised through a school | • A person hosting or billeting a student under 18 years for more than 10 days or on more than 2 occasions per year eg. hosting a foreign exchange high school student for a four-week period  
• Any person over 18 years who usually resides in a home where home stay is being provided to children and young people under the age of 18 | • A person hosting or providing accommodation to a child who is a relative eg. a child staying with a grandparent, uncle, aunt or cousin to attend school  
• A person providing accommodation to a child through a private arrangement with the child’s parent/guardian eg. staying with family friends. |
| ☑ Child accommodation services, including home stay category | | |

**General information about blue cards ...**
- Blue cards are valid for three years, unless cancelled or suspended by the Commission earlier.
- Volunteers and trainee students are processed free of charge. The application fee for paid employers and business applications is $70.
- It is compulsory for employers/organisations to notify the Commission if they employ someone in child-related work who already holds a blue card. This ensures the Commission has current employment details for all blue card holders and can notify employers if a blue card is suspended or cancelled.
- Volunteer blue card holders moving into paid work with children (either as a paid employee or person operating a business) must transfer their blue card to a paid blue card. The application fee is $70 and they will receive a new blue card which will be valid for an additional three years.

**Important information for employers and organisations**
- Organisations and businesses regulated by the blue card system e.g. schools, boarding facilities, home stay programs and P&C associations, are required to develop and implement a child and youth risk management strategy and update this strategy annually.
- There are eight minimum requirements for a child and youth risk management strategy, including keeping a register of all blue card holders and applicants in your organisation, developing a code of conduct and having a strategy for dealing with disclosures or suspicions of harm.
- The Commission has an online toolkit available on the Commission’s website to assist organisations to develop or strengthen their child and youth risk management strategy.

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**Where can I get more information?**
For more information about who requires screening and to obtain application forms, visit the Commission’s website at [www.bluecard.qld.gov.au](http://www.bluecard.qld.gov.au)

**Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian**

**Street address:** Level 17, 53 Albert Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

**Blue Card Contact Centre:**

**Office Hours:** 8:00am – 5:00pm
Monday to Friday

**Telephone:** 07 3211 6999

**Freecall:** 1800 113 611

**Fax:** 07 3035 5910

**Email:** bluecard@ccypcg.qld.gov.au

**Website:** [www.bluecard.qld.gov.au](http://www.bluecard.qld.gov.au)

**Postal:** PO Box 12671, Brisbane George Street
QLD Australia 4003

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**Contact us**
Statement of Principles for Employment In Catholic Schools

Catholic Education
Archdiocese of Brisbane

Rationale
This is a statement concerning the Catholic education employers’ expectations about standards as they apply to the professional and witness responsibilities of any staff member.

Catholic education is called to provide a climate where the dignity of the human person is valued and affirmed and where community is developed with a profound relationship between the Gospel and culture.

The principles have been derived from a reflection on the documents of the Church namely:

1965 Declaration on Christian Education
1977 The Catholic School
1982 Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith
1988 The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School
1998 The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium

Inspiration and direction for all staff members is derived from the following points taken from an address by John Paul II given to Catholic Educators, September 12, 1984.

The Church looks upon you as co-workers with an important measure of shared responsibility.

To you it is given to create the future and give it direction by offering students a set of values with which to assess their newly discovered knowledge.

The changing times demand that educators be open to new cultural influences and interpret them for your pupils in the light of Christian faith.

You are called to bring professional competence and a high standard of excellence to your work.

Your responsibilities make demands on you that go far beyond the need for professional skills and competence.

Through you, as through a clear window on a sunny day, students must come to see and know the richness and the joy of a life lived in accordance with Christ’s teaching, in response to His challenging demands.

To teach means not only to impart what we know, but also to reveal whom we are by living what we believe.

We are called to meet the challenge in paragraph 19 of The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium —

We must remember that teachers and educators fulfil a specific Christian vocation and share an equally specific participation in the mission of the Church, to the extent that ‘it depends chiefly on them whether the Catholic school achieves its purpose’.

Contractual Principles
Each staff member has an indispensable role to play in contributing to Catholic education. It is required of all staff members employed in Catholic education that they:

• recognise and accept that the Catholic school is more than an educative institution as it is a key part of the Church, an integral element of the Church’s mission;
• be qualified for the position and meet all registration, accreditation and other requirements of the State and Church;
• be committed to participation in regular on-going professional development;
• accept and support the Catholic educational philosophy, policy and practices of the school;
• develop and maintain an adequate understanding of those aspects of Catholic teaching that touch upon their areas of responsibility;
• strive by their service, performance of duties and personal example to inculcate in students an appreciation and acceptance of Christian teaching and values;
• avoid, whether by word, action or known lifestyle, any influence upon students that is contrary to the teaching and values of the Church community in whose name they act.

BEFORE EMPLOYMENT THE APPLICANT MUST READ, UNDERSTAND AND ACCEPT, AS AN EXPLICIT TERM OF CONTRACT, THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES FOR EMPLOYMENT IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS.
This Code of Conduct applies to all persons volunteering within Brisbane Catholic Education.

- All volunteers should participate in a Student Protection Induction.
- All non-parent volunteers must undergo employment screening under the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2005 and hold a current Positive Notice Blue Card for volunteers.
- Volunteers have a significant role in the work of the school. Volunteers have an integral part to play in providing a safe and enjoyable environment for young people.
- Volunteers are expected to follow the principles of:
  - Safety
  - Respect
  - Support
  - Ethical Communication
  - Ethical Conduct.
- Volunteers should:
  - Behave honestly and with integrity
  - Act with care and diligence
  - Behave and dress appropriately
- Volunteers should think and act safety:
  - Put safety first in all activities.
Follow the safety procedures outlined in the St Stephen’s School Guidelines, to the best of your ability, as outlined in the volunteer induction process.

If a direct threat is identified, assist in the evacuation of the area and/or situation as quickly as possible.

Work only according to your level of competency. Contact and report to School Administration when confronted with a situation which you are unable to contend with or is beyond your role and responsibility.

Volunteers should treat students and staff with respect:

- Respect the rights of individuals and maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality.
- Treat everyone with courtesy, sensitivity, tact, consideration and humility.
- Assist in the creation of an environment free of fear, harassment, racism and exploitation.
- Respect the cultures, beliefs, opinions and decisions of others although you may not always agree.
- Take instruction from and not obstruct the responsible staff members in any way in regards to the execution of their duties.
- Report any illegal activity to the School’s Administration or appropriate staff member.

Volunteers should use appropriate communication skills when engaging with students:

- Acknowledge the needs and concerns of the individual.
- Practise effective listening (For example: ask open questions; be alert to non-verbal communication; stay calm and relaxed).
- Be aware of the young person’s physical space.
- Be aware of your own body language.
- Be judicious in making physical contact with young people and at all times seek the young persons permission to do so.
- Stay calm and relaxed.
Be clear and consistent.

Use non-discriminatory respectful and non-judgmental language.

Seek advice whenever appropriate.

As a volunteer, you must follow all instructions from the staff and School Administration. You should not engage directly with media representatives, and should refer all enquiries to School Administration.

Volunteers must not:

- Smoke or use tobacco products while volunteering and/or on school property.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol at any time while volunteering and/or on school property.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time while volunteering and/or on school property.
- Condone the use of, or provided any of the above substances to any students, employees or other volunteers.
- Verbally harass or abuse any person or use profanity while volunteering and/or on school property.
- Utilize your position as a volunteer to take advantage of any young person.

Any breaches of this Code of Conduct will be dealt with by the school principal in the first instance and appropriate authorities will be contacted if necessary.

Should you have any questions with regard to any of the above you should contact the school Principal in the first instance on (07) 3711 4911.
VOLUNTEER SUITABILITY DECLARATION

Please read both sides of this form before signing

I have read and understood the information on the back of this form in relation to the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000 and understand my responsibilities and obligations under this Act.

I understand that if I fall within the definition of ‘not suitable’ as defined in the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000 I am ineligible to apply for, commence or continue in, child-related employment. (See reverse for definition of ‘employment’)

I understand that if I currently fall within the definition of ‘suitable’ and I am later convicted of a “serious offence” as defined in the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000 and therefore ‘not suitable’ for child-related employment, I must not apply for, commence or continue in, child-related employment.

Please tick (X) one box

☐ I am ‘suitable’ as defined by this Act to apply for, commence or continue in, child-related employment.

or

☐ I am ‘not suitable’ as defined by this Act to apply for, commence or continue in, child-related employment.

_________________________________________  __________________________
Name (Printed)                                      Signature

_________________________________________
Date

NOTE:
Please seek advice from the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian if you are unsure of your ‘suitability’ status.
Please return this form to: The Principal
Volunteer suitability declaration
Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000

The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000 legislates to promote and protect the rights, interests and well being of children in Queensland.

A serious offence is defined in Schedule 4 of the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000 as:

(a) an offence against a provision mentioned in the schedule to the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992; or
(b) an offence against a provision of the Criminal Code mentioned in schedule 2; or
(c) an offence of counselling or procuring the commission of, or attempting or conspiring to commit, an offence mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b); or
(d) an offence against a law of another jurisdiction that substantially corresponds to an offence mention in paragraphs (a) to (c).

Child-related regulated employment within Brisbane Catholic Education schools refers to:

Schools – employees other than teachers and parents
All paid employees (excluding registered teachers) and volunteers (excluding those under 18 years and parents of a child enrolled at the school) whose usual duties include, or are likely to include:

- providing services at a school that are directed mainly towards children
- or conducting activities at a school that mainly involve children

Counselling and support services
Paid employees and volunteers whose usual duties include, or are likely to include, providing counselling or a similar support service to a child in a situation where:

- the employee is physically present with the child while no other person is present or;
- the employee is not physically present with the child (i.e.: over the internet or telephone).

Private teaching, coaching or tutoring on a commercial basis
Paid employees and volunteers whose usual duties include, or are likely to include, the teaching, coaching or tutoring of a child, individually, on a commercial basis.

Employment
A person is employing another person if there is an agreement with the other person to carry out work, irrespective of the nature of that work. Regardless of the following:

- whether the agreement is written or unwritten; and
- whether the work is carried out voluntarily or for financial reward; and
- what a person’s motivation is for carrying out the work; and
- the time for which the person is engaged to carry out the work; and
- whether the agreement provides for the person to carry out work on 1 occasion or on an ongoing basis, whether regularly or irregularly.

Under this Act:
(i) It is an offence
- for a person convicted of a serious offence, and whom the Commission deems ‘not suitable’ to apply for, or start or continue in, child-related employment
- for a person with a current Suitability Card, who is subsequently convicted of a serious offence, to carry out any work in child-related employment
- to provide false or misleading information or documents for the purpose of the ‘working with children check’.

(ii) Persons employed or engaged in child-related employment must disclose changes in their criminal history to their employers who, in turn, must apply to the Commission for a new ‘working with children check’ for the employee. Failure to do so will result in an offence.
Student Protection

Handbook for volunteers

Catholic Education
Archdiocese of Brisbane
2006
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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 welfare.

Brisbane Catholic Education seeks to continue its adherence to legislative requirements and duty of care to students by a commitment to the implementation of student protection strategies and procedures.

The volunteer's role in the school

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

This document outlines your responsibilities as a volunteer in the vital area of student protection and it is important that you read this document, in conjunction with the Volunteer Code of Conduct, so you understand your responsibilities in the protection of our students.

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’

Harm is defined legally in the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act and Regulations 2001, and the Child Protection Act 1999 as:

‘Harm caused to the student under 18 years is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the student's physical, psychological or emotional well being. It is immaterial how the harm is caused.’

Within a school there are four circumstances where harm can be caused to a student.

They are:
1. Harm to a student by a staff member or volunteer of the school.
2. Harm to a student by someone outside the school.
3. Harm by other students
4. Student self harm
What are reasonable grounds to suspect harm to a student?

*Reasonable grounds* to suspect that harm to a student may have occurred is when:

- a student speaks about being harmed or being in danger of being harmed
- someone else (perhaps a relative, friend, acquaintance or sibling of the student) informs you that they suspect a student has been harmed
- a student tells you that they know a child who has been harmed (often the student is referring to him/herself)
- you observe a particular student’s behaviour, physical appearance or social relationships that raises concerns of possible harm to the student.

What is a disclosure of harm?

Sometimes a student may approach you and tell you about their experience of being harmed. This is described as a disclosure.

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:**

- Let them tell their experience first in their own words and at their own time.
- Listen attentively to their story
- React calmly to the information the student provides though it might be upsetting
- Reassure the student that they have done the right thing to tell e.g. “I am pleased you have told me these things”
- Reassure the child that it is not his/her fault that whatever the concern is has occurred
- **At this stage you may ask for clarification ONLY if it is necessary. If you have the essence of the story, you probably have enough information to report your concerns**
- Be thoughtful and careful of the student’s feelings at this time. They may be distressed or ashamed, so they will need care and reassurance
- Be aware of privacy issues for the student
- Treat this information confidentially and discuss it only with the right person out of the hearing of other students
- Be honest with the student about your responsibility for taking action.
- Act immediately to report the concerns to the principal or the school student protection contact (SPC) (See below for more about this)

**DO NOT:**

- Panic
- React emotionally or accuse the alleged perpetrator.
- Ask leading questions e.g. Was it your father who did this to you?
- Make promises that you cannot keep – particularly about not telling others (e.g. relevant adults such as the principal etc) about the information
- Leave the student alone immediately after a disclosure as they will be feeling very vulnerable at this time
- Discuss the situation with parents, caregivers or others (other than those designated e.g. principal, student protection contact.)
Your reporting responsibilities
In any instance where you either become aware, or reasonably suspect harm to a student has occurred, or there is a risk of it occurring, you must report this as soon as possible to the principal or the school student protection contact (SPC). Please check with your school principal about whom you are to report to if you have concerns about a student.

REMEMBER
Maintaining confidentiality is vital for the protection of all involved.

What happens next?
Once you have reported the alleged harm of a student, the principal or the SPC will do whatever is necessary to make sure the student is safe. Brisbane Catholic Education has student protection reporting processes and all Brisbane Catholic Education staff have received training in student protection. You can rest assured that your report will be taken seriously, dealt with immediately and reported to the appropriate State authorities where necessary.

Below are some scenarios for your consideration

**Scenario 1**
You work as a volunteer in the tuckshop. You notice a yr 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. What do you do?

**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 and you observe the volunteer angrily hit the student on the arm. You have worked with this volunteer all year and usually have morning tea with her. What do you do?

**Scenario 3**
You are a volunteer and assist with the school Year five 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. You remember someone remarking in the past that this girl was a little ‘strange’. What do you do?

**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 six 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. What do you do?

**Answers:**
In each of the above situations you should be reporting these incidents to the principal or another delegated person e.g. SPC. You do not have to be sure that a student has been harmed.
**Very Important Note**

If you have been involved in a student protection matter in your role as a school volunteer, be aware of your own reactions and seek support if required. Your principal can assist you with this issue.

Finally, please sign the following page where indicated to confirm you understand your student protection responsibilities as a volunteer.

Brisbane Catholic Education thanks you for your support for our schools and our students

**References and Resources**

More information on student protection in Brisbane Catholic Education can be found in the following documents:

1. Archdiocese of Brisbane Catholic Education Council *Student Protection Policy – May 2005*

2. *Student Protection – Reporting and Investigative Processes for allegations of Inappropriate Behaviour and Harm to child/student by employees 2004*

3. *Student Protection – Reporting Processes for Allegations of Harm to Child/Student by Someone who is not immediately associated with the school (family member, friend or other), other students and student self-harm 2004*
St Stephen’s Catholic Primary School, Algester

Volunteer Student Protection Information Sign off
Original of completed sign off sheet to be retained by school

I ………………………………..confirm that I have been given the volunteer student protection hand book and that I understand my reporting responsibilities as a volunteer.

Volunteer’s signature…………………………………..Date………………

Assistant Principal’s signature……………………………………Date………………
SCHOOL VOLUNTEER REGISTER SHEET
For Workplace, Health & Safety

Surname:                                   First Name:

Date of Birth:                             Contact Number:

Address:

City/Suburb:                               Post Code:

I have been provided with a copy of:

☐ Voice Care Advice

☐ Sun Safety

☐ Lifting and Carrying Instructions

I ______________________ have read and understand the above.

Signed:                                     Date:

Please hand this form to the School Office.
Introduction
Although most people begin life with good voices, the vocal demands of modern working life and the strong social, health and psychological influences on the human voice often mean that many people develop ineffective and inefficient voice production techniques. Ineffective and inefficient voice production techniques include poor breathing, body posture, vocal fold vibration and voice projection strategies. Teachers who use less than optimal voice production strategies are at increased risk of developing voice disorders, even if they do not engage in the vocal misuse habits outlined in the Minimising Harmful Vocal Habits information sheets. This information sheet outlines some fundamental guidelines for good voice production technique in each of the areas of breathing, posture, vocal fold vibration and voice projection.

A word of caution
The voice production guidelines outlined here are not designed to provide teachers with comprehensive voice production training. The information presented in this information sheet is at a basic level only and is not intended for use by teachers with established voice disorders. In order to learn optimal vocal technique, far more than printed guidelines are required. One-to-one practical voice training lessons with an experienced speech pathologist or voice teacher are the most effective way to ensure that a teacher uses good voice production strategies.

Breathing for voice
Efficient breathing for voice production is characterised by the following features:
- Silent inspiration of air
- Quick inspiration and slow exhalation of air in a rhythmic pattern
- Relaxation and expansion of the lower ribs and abdominal area on inspiration of air
- A focus on the lower part of the body for breathing during speaking
- Little or no movement of the upper chest and shoulders on inspiration of air
- A focus on exhalation of air rather than on inspiration so that inspiration is automatic and relaxed
- Release of breath either simultaneously with or just before the onset of voice - not too early or too late
- Pausing as soon as there are signs that you are about to run out of breath so that inspiration of air will occur automatically for the next phrase
- Regulation of breath supply to coordinate with the length of phrases – take sufficient air in for the amount you wish to say in each utterance

Breathing exercises
1. To focus on the lower part of the body for breathing:
   Lie on your back on the floor with your knees up and your neck supported by a cushion.
   Put your hands on your lower abdomen and breathe in deeply but easily and feel your lower ribs and abdomen move out against your hands as you breathe in.
   Make sure that you breathe in easily so that your abdomen relaxes to expand; do not push your stomach out! As you breathe out, let the air from your lungs out slowly and gently feel your ribs and abdomen move back down to their resting position. Breathe in and out gently and quietly in this way for one minute.
   Stay lying on your back breathing in this way, but now breathe in for a count of two and then hold as “s” sound for as long as possible as you breathe out. Keep the sound steady and don’t let it die away or get louder.
   Time the duration of the sound as you breathe out (just count to yourself) and aim for 15-20 seconds.
   Keep your hands on your abdomen so that you can still feel the expansion and then deflation of your abdomen as you breathe in and out.
   Try some different sounds in the same way – “sh”, “f”, “z”. Then repeat the same exercise but vary the loudness of the sounds in different ways – eg. “ssssSSSSSS$, “SSSSssssss”, “ssssSSSSSSSSssss”, “SSSSSSssssssss$”. Feel your abdomen “pumping” as you change the loudness of the sound.
   Now repeat all of these exercises while you sit or stand in front of a mirror. Keep your hands on your lower abdomen throughout each exercise and make sure that you do not lift your shoulders or upper chest as you breathe.
2. To breathe in naturally and coordinate breathing with your phrasing:

Breathe out and eliminate as much air as possible from the lungs. Wait for a second or two without consciously trying to breathe in. You will feel yourself naturally inspiring air with a sudden inflow of air. It is not necessary to think of breathing in, as this will happen automatically. Repeat this exercise five to ten times. Now repeat the exercise but say the 'oo' sound as you breathe out. When the air from your lungs is used up, simply pause and allow the lungs to refill naturally. On this exercise, do not produce the sound to the point of creating tension in your chest; simply pause to let the air flow into your lungs before you become tense.

Read the following phrases out loud. As the phrases become longer, notice how you begin to run out of breath. Signs of running out of breath include deterioration in the quality of your voice and a feeling of tightness or discomfort in your chest and throat.

**A windy day**

* A cold, windy day
* A cold, wet, windy day in winter
* It was a very cold, wet and windy day in winter
* It was a very cold, wet and windy day in winter and the wind was blowing
* It was a very cold, wet and windy day in winter and the wind was blowing the trees
* It was a very cold, wet and windy day in winter and the wind was blowing the trees as she walked
* It was a very cold, wet and windy day in winter and the wind was blowing the trees as she walked through the park
* It was a very cold, wet and windy day in winter and the wind was blowing the trees as she walked through the park with her dog
* It was a very cold, wet and windy day in winter and the wind was blowing the trees as she walked through the park with her dog Max and the puppies

Now read these sentences again, but this time, as soon as you notice that you are about to run out of breath, become tense in the chest or throat, or feel your voice deteriorate, pause to take a breath. Mark the sentences with a § in the places where it would make sense to pause to top up with air.

Now read out a passage of about 20 lines from a book or the newspaper. Notice where you begin to show signs of running out of breath and mark the passage with a § in the places where it would make sense to pause to top up with air. Remember to pause and let the airflow in naturally, rather than consciously breathing in.

**Posture**

Any imbalance in body posture can adversely affect the way in which the larynx and vocal folds function to produce voice. This is because poor posture anywhere in the body can lead to excess tension and lack of flexibility in the muscles of breathing and voice. The following are some tips for achieving effective body alignment for voice production:

**Do:**
* Align the head with your spine (ears over shoulders)
* Keep posture symmetrical
* Balance your weight evenly when standing
* Keep arms relaxed
* Keep the shoulders level and relaxed and in a slightly forward-sloping position
* Keep knee joints loose and legs relaxed
* Keep the feet directed forward and approximately 20 cm apart where possible
* Keep the rib cage relaxed and lifted
* Keep the shoulders relaxed and lowered

**Don't:**
* Thrust the chin forward or up
* Throw the head back
* Clench the teeth
* Push the tongue against the teeth
* Clench the hands or toes
* Round the shoulders
* Slump the spine
* Lean excessively forwards or sideways
* Tilt the pelvis excessively
* Hold a rigid posture
* Try to keep the spine straight
* Lock the knees
* Keep thigh muscles braced
* Raise or hunch the shoulders
* Narrow the back
* Stand or sit with an asymmetrical posture
Vocal fold vibration
The keys to efficient vocal fold vibration are relaxation of the muscles inside the larynx, using a pitch level that is comfortable for your vocal folds, and effective voice projection. Voice projection guidelines will be outlined in the next section of this Information Sheet. The following guidelines will assist you to keep the laryngeal muscles relaxed and to use a comfortable pitch.

Pitch
Every voice has its own comfortable pitch range. Frequent lowering of pitch to make yourself sound more in control or authoritative, or using a weak, high pitched voice in order to sound less dominant, younger or “sexy” can lead to vocal dysfunction. Similarly, frequent use of the voice at the extremes of your pitch range or beyond your comfortable pitch range in speaking or singing can cause vocal problems. Just like a musical instrument, the voice works most efficiently within its own pitch range.

A simple way to locate your comfortable pitch for speaking is to say “hmm” as if you are signifying agreement (i.e. humming in the same way that you would say “OK” to someone in a carefree way). This sound is likely to be around your comfortable speaking pitch. In addition, you can tell whether or not you are using a comfortable pitch range in speaking or singing by monitoring your voice quality and discomfort in the chest and throat. Any deterioration in the quality of your voice or any feelings of tightness or discomfort in the chest and throat when you use high or low pitches indicates that you have probably exceeded your comfortable range.

Relaxation of the vocal fold muscles
Relaxation of the larynx can be achieved in several different ways:

- Begin to yawn purposely and notice how your throat seems to relax and open wider (but do not finish the yawn – the end of the yawn involves an unwanted increase in tension of your throat and tongue muscles). Try to capture that feeling of relaxed openness when you talk.
- Use a gentle, easy onset to voicing, particularly on words beginning with vowel sounds. One way to encourage this easy onset to voicing is to contrast the feelings in the throat when you say words beginning with “h” and words beginning with vowels. Using the following list, listen and feel the contrast between these two types of words. You should notice that you begin the words starting with “h” in a more relaxed way than you do the words beginning with vowels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>hoe</th>
<th>oh</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>high</td>
<td>eye</td>
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<tr>
<td>heat</td>
<td>eat</td>
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<tr>
<td>hill</td>
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<td>handy</td>
<td>Andy</td>
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<tr>
<td>hedge</td>
<td>edge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hear</td>
<td>ear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now say the words starting with vowel sounds and try to capture the same feeling of relaxation and easy voice production as you do when saying the words beginning with “h”. You could even imagine that you are saying a tiny “h” before each vowel.

Then say the following phrases using an easy onset to each word. It can be helpful to use an image such as tiptoeing or stepping lightly onto the vowels.

Isadora is an ostrich
I am an Eskimo
Anne is an extrovert
I eat ice cream
Alf is an excellent organiser
Uncle Arthur is amusing
Over and over and over again
Only elephants eat eels
Aunt Alice is especially irritating

- Practicing a “silent giggle” as you speak can also help to relax the larynx and vocal folds. Silently giggle in your throat like laughing at a young child without showing them that you are laughing at them. Alternatively, snigger like a child would to another child who is being reprimanded.

While you giggle silently, breathe in and out gently and notice how quiet your breathing is. Then giggle silently again, keep breathing in and out and say vowel sounds gently (e.g. “h”, “ee”, “oo”, “or”). In the same way, keep the posture of the giggle in your throat and say the days of the week, numbers, the months of the year.
Voice projection

The most important key to effective voice projection is to use what is known as “head resonance focus” as you speak, especially when you want the voice to carry above noise or over large distances. To use a head resonance focus you will need to project your voice from your head instead of your throat. As you speak or sing, imagine your voice making the bones and skin of your face and head vibrate as you speak. You can feel this happening when you hum in a singsong way on “m” or “n” sounds for a few seconds.

Place your fingers lightly on the side of your nose as you hum these sounds gently. Feel the vibrations through your fingers and try to make these vibrations stronger as you hum. Try placing the palm of your hand on the top of your head or on your cheekbones as you hum these sounds. Again, feel the vibrations produced by your voice.

Now try humming “m” or “n” in a singsong way for a few seconds without placing your hand on your head. Try to capture the same feeling of head vibration or resonance inside your head as you hum. This internal sensation of skull vibration is the sensation you should try to capture whenever you need to project your voice.

To assist your voice to project even more easily, you will also need to open your mouth widely when you speak. Think of your mouth as your megaphone! You can increase this megaphone effect even further when you need to project your voice by cupping your hands around your mouth. This simple action will transmit your voice more effectively above noise or over large distances.

A note on warming up the voice

To increase the efficiency and endurance of your voice during the teaching day, it is a good idea to warm up your voice prior to extensive speaking or singing. To warm up your speaking voice, five minutes of practicing the breathing, laryngeal relaxation and humming exercises outlined previously may allow your voice to function better for the whole day. If you sing extensively as a teacher, seek advice on warm up routines for the singing voice from a reputable singing teacher.
Why protect your skin?

QUEENSLANDERS have the highest rate of skin cancer in Australia and the world.

Two out of three Queenslanders can expect to develop some type of skin cancer. Skin cancer and skin damage is caused by over-exposing our skin to the sun's ultraviolet rays.

Outdoor workers have a higher risk of skin cancer, as they can spend many hours outside being exposed to the sun's ultraviolet rays.

The eyes can also be damaged by the sun's ultraviolet rays and need to be protected.

How to protect you skin

Natural protection is the best:

- avoid as much as possible being outside between 10a.m. - 2p.m.
- reorganise work times where possible so that outdoor tasks are done early in the morning or late afternoon.
- use trees, building and other temporary shelter (e.g. awnings, umbrellas) to produce shade
- ensure that shade is available for meal breaks

Personal Protection

Clothes provide the best protection:

- long sleeved shirts and trousers
- darker colours are best
- tight weave of material
- loose fitting for coolness
- with a collar to protect the neck

Hat and sunglasses

Protect the face, neck, ears and eyes:
- a hat with a broad brim 10-12cm, or with a flap at the back (legionnaires type)
- or a hard hat with a flap or brim added
- sunglasses - look for the code AS1067

Sunscreen

Sunscreen protects any skin not covered by clothes (face ears, back of neck, hands, legs etc.):
- use a 15+ broadspectrum sunscreen
- apply it 20 minutes before going outside
- re-apply it every two hours
- apply zinc cream to lips and nose for extra protection

Check for skin cancer

Sun has a damaging effect on the skin and over time changes can be noticed. Some of these changes can be early skin cancers and early melanoma.

It is important that you regularly examine your skin. This will ensure that the early changes on the skin are noticed by you and shown to your doctor.

Check all your skin and especially the parts of the body most affected by the sun i.e. your face, neck, ears, shoulders, arms and hands.

Skin cancer can be any lump, bump, sore or spot that doesn't go away within four weeks. It may be:
- smooth, pearly looking, red unhealing, raised, crusty, scaling, ulcerated, or a mole or freckle that changes or looks different.
- If you find a new spot which grows or changes, or a sore which doesn't heal in four weeks, see your doctor immediately.
Lifting and carrying loads and workplace injury

Lifting and carrying loads is the major cause of work-related lower back problems.

The muscular effort in lifting and carrying depends mostly on the -

\[ \Rightarrow \text{weight of the load, and} \]
\[ \Rightarrow \text{distance of the centre of gravity}^{1} \text{ of the load from the body.} \]

Therefore, the heavier the load, and the further away the load is from the body, the greater the muscular effort needed to handle it is.

For example, a 4 kg weight held at a distance of 50 cm requires the same effort as a 20 kg weight held close to the body.

The effect of posture

The back muscles have to work harder when lifting with the back bent forward, because they also need to support the upper body.

Injuries are more likely to happen when the back is fully bent forwards, and/or when combined with twisting.

Figure 1 shows a person holding a 20 kg load in both the standing and bent positions. There is an almost three fold increase in the forces on the spine in the bent position when compared with the straight position.

Effect of posture on the discs

Increased disc pressures over a certain level can lead to injury.

Disc pressures are lowest when the back is straight. Pressures increase when the back is bent or twisted and the back muscles are active.

When picking up a load with the back bent, the front part of the disc is squeezed and this can cause damage, particularly if done repeatedly.

Combining bending sideways or twisting further increases disc pressures. This has implications for handling loads, particularly with the back bent.

Other factors that increase the effort in lifting and carrying

In addition to the weight and distance of the load from the body, other factors that increase the effort include –

\[ \Rightarrow \text{the distance the load has to be lifted} \] - this is the difference (vertically) between the start and the end of the lift

\[ \Rightarrow \text{twisting} \] - having to twist the trunk and shoulders to handle the load

\[ \Rightarrow \text{frequency of lifting} \] - the number of lifts to be performed over a shift

\[ \Rightarrow \text{lifting duration} \] - the total time in a workshift spent lifting

\[ \Rightarrow \text{load placement clearance} \] - careful manoeuvring to place loads at their final location increases the holding time

\[ \Rightarrow \text{load shape and composition} \] - loads which are bulky, unwieldy or unstable with the contents likely to shift

\[ \Rightarrow \text{off-centre or loads} \] - loads that are unevenly balanced eg. one side heavier than the other

\[ \Rightarrow \text{how easy the load is to grip} \] - if the handles are not suitable, or the packaging is slippery, a worker will need to use to use additional gripping force

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1 The centre of gravity of a regular object is situated at its centre. In an object of uneven weight distribution, it is towards the heavier side.
**Workplace conditions**, such as whether slopes or stairs have to be negotiated when carrying loads

**The weather** - whether it is hot and humid, or very cold

**The physical capacity** of individual workers.

**How Should Loads Be Lifted**

You should:

- keep the load as close to the body as possible during all lifting and carrying procedures.
- avoid lifting –
  - with the back fully bent
  - from a position where it is necessary to twist or bend sideways to place the load
  - after prolonged periods with the back bent
  - after a prolonged period of exposure to whole body vibration eg. driving a vehicle.

**How much weight to lift**

Weight limits cannot be set because of the many factors other than weight involved.

The level of loading on the worker's spine is the vital factor, but it is difficult to measure.

**Workplace Responsibilities**

You should use a risk management process to meet your legal obligations with regard to controlling your workers' exposure to lifting and carrying loads.

Employers must also –

- design work processes and equipment so as to eliminate or minimise risk
- specify carefully when you purchase new tools or equipment
- consult workers and their representatives

- train workers to perform their jobs without risk to health and safety.

**Controlling risks from lifting and carrying loads**

You should consider manual lifting or carrying of heavy loads only as a last resort.

As part of the risk control process, consider the following -

- **Provide mechanical handling aids.** These should be -
  - designed to suit the load and the work being done
  - as light as their function will allow
  - easy to use and not cause an obstruction
  - located close to the work area so as to be readily available
  - in good working order, so set up a maintenance schedule
  - brought to staff attention when new, so additional risks are not introduced eg. a forklift appearing without warning in a work area.

- **Modify the handling task.** When mechanical aids cannot be used -
  - make loads lighter, less bulky and easier to grasp by providing handles
  - make sure packaging is not causing problems by being slippery or an uncomfortable temperature
  - take precautions if contents are likely to move
  - reduce the amount of loading/unloading by using mobile racks for pallets, containers or trays
  - convert from carrying to pushing, pulling, sliding or rolling suitable loads
  - move loads using skids, skates, wheels and slides.

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2 The Workplace Health and Safety Act (1995) requires employers to ensure the health and safety of every person (workers and others) at a workplace is not affected by their business.
**Improve storage of loads.** The best level of muscular effort can be exerted at about knuckle height (70 - 80 cm). Where possible –

* store loads at this level
* avoid storage above shoulder level or close to the floor except for light or infrequently used items
* if the object must be lifted from a low to a high position, have an intermediate surface so the worker can rest the load for a moment before shifting grip.

**Change location of loads.** Improve work area layout to reduce carry distances -

* stipulate to suppliers where products are to be delivered. Plan the location to minimise the distance where loads are stored, and where they will be used.

**Avoid double handling.** Consider "just in time" arrangements to reduce the amount of materials in storage or requiring handling

**Use team handling.** Make sure there is a procedure for workers to access help with handling, particularly if they are working alone.

Team handling may be needed when mechanical aids are not practical.

**Train and supervise workers.** You must train workers to do their jobs safety. Make sure you include the following -

* how and when to use any mechanical handling aids
* when to call for help when handling
* how to handle loads safely.

**Keep the load as close to the body as possible.** This is very important in reducing the strain on your back.

**Turn with the whole body rather than just the trunk to avoid twisting the back.**

Try to avoid lifting -

* from a position where it is necessary to twist or bend sideways to place the load
* after long periods with the back bent
* immediately after driving a vehicle.

Do not lift if you are not convinced that you can handle the load safely - call for help.

**Lifting from a low position**

The more you have to bend forward to pick up the load, the greater the stress on your back.

When you are bending forward to pick up or put down a load, do not fully bend your back. This can be damaging if you are handling a heavy load.

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**Note** – heavy loads you are physically able to handle can still be damaging, particularly if you are doing it repeatedly.

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**Further Information**

Contact Workplace Health and Safety Queensland:

Phone: 1300 369 915

Internet: [www.whs.qld.gov.au](http://www.whs.qld.gov.au)

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**Hints to the worker on how to lift**

The following are general lifting principles -

* Do not do a job with repetitive lifting before you have warmed up. Spend some time doing other jobs first.
* Stand as close to the load as you can.
* Get a good grip on the load.

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3 For further information, look at the safety link on “team handling”.

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Queensland Government
Department of Industrial Relations