

Participation of Students and Volunteers Policy

Purpose

This policy will provide guidelines for the engagement and participation of volunteers and students at ECMS services whilst ensuring that children's health, safety and wellbeing is protected at all times.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- The Approved Provider, persons with management or control, Centre Director, Nominated Supervisor, and persons in day-to-day charge.
- Early Childhood teachers, educators, staff, contractors, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, and others enrolled and participating in ECMS programs and services, including during offsite excursions and activities.
- All ECMS-operated Early Learning Centres and Kindergarten programs.

Policy Statement

ECMS is committed to an anti-bias approach in early childhood. ECMS operates within a framework of social justice and equity - this means we celebrate family and cultural diversity and aim to be supportive, responsive, and inclusive of all children.

This policy outlines the guidelines for the participation of students and volunteers at ECMS services, ensuring their involvement supports the educational program and promotes the safety, well-being, and development of all enrolled children. ECMS committed to providing a welcoming, safe, and supportive environment for students and volunteers to gain practical experience and contribute to our services, while maintaining compliance with the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*, the National Quality Framework and the Child Safe Standards. All students and volunteers will be supervised appropriately and will adhere to the service's policies and procedures at all times.

Policy Principles

ECMS is committed to:

- Supporting connections with educational institutions to provide opportunities for students to undertake practicum placements as part of their studies
- Building relationships with community members and providing suitable opportunities to engage volunteers and family members to contribute to the programs and activities of the service
- Ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of each child at the service through consistent compliance with this policy and procedures when engaging volunteers and students
- Values honest and open reciprocal communication between volunteers and family helpers and the service based on mutual respect, equity and fairness
- Values connectedness. Educators will assist volunteers and family helpers to feel connected with, and help them develop trust and confidence in, the service
- ECMS staff will ensure that volunteers, work experience students and parent helpers are provided with adequate information, training and supervision to participate safely in the services
- Volunteers and students may participate in programs and activities at the service from time to time in order to observe and experience the provision of centre-based education and care. This will be encouraged and facilitated by the Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director wherever appropriate and possible
- Each ECMS service values the participation of parents/guardians and other family members, and the voluntary contribution they make to the education and care of their own and other children. *'In genuine partnerships families and educators value each other's knowledge and roles, communicate freely and respectfully and engage in shared decision making'* (Early Years Learning Framework).
- Each ECMS service aims to provide a range of opportunities for family members, volunteers and students to participate in programs and activities while adhering to clear guidelines regarding appropriate interactions and communication with staff, and other adults and children at the service (refer to *Code of Conduct Policy*).

Background

The participation of students and volunteers is a valuable aspect of our services. It allows ECMS to enrich our educational programs and strengthens our community connections. Students undertaking placements from educational institutions gain practical experience and develop professional skills. Volunteers, including family and community members, contribute their time, skills, and unique perspectives to support children enrolled at our services.

This policy has been developed in line with the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*, specifically Regulations 84, 85, 90, 97, 149, 168, 170, 299D, 358. This

Document Name: Participation of Students and Volunteers Policy	Next Review Date: August 2026	Document Version: 7.0
Document Owner: Director of ECE	File Location: Inside Play Resources Policy and Procedure	Release date: July 2014 Page 2 of 7

policy aims to provide clarity on the roles, responsibilities, and necessary checks for all students and volunteers to ensure a safe and high-quality environment for everyone.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Educator-to-Child Ratio	The required number of educators for a specific number of children in a service, as outlined in the <i>Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011</i> . Students and volunteers are not counted in this ratio unless they meet the definition of an educator.
Student	An individual undertaking a formal placement as part of a course of study from a recognised educational institution (e.g., TAFE, university). Students are primarily at the services to learn and gain practical experience under supervision.
Volunteer	Any person who offers their time and expertise to assist the service without financial compensation. This can include parents, grandparents, community members, or other individuals who contribute to the service's operations, activities, or events.
Working with Children Check (WWCC)	A mandatory screening process for people who work or volunteer with children. A valid WWCC is required for all students and volunteers before they can participate in the service.

Record-keeping

- Authorisation and collection records are kept in accordance with ECMS retention procedures
- Visitor logs and incident reports are maintained and reviewed regularly

Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years or earlier if legislation or organisational practice changes. The Director of People is responsible for ensuring timely review and consultation.

Roles & Responsibilities

Chief Executive Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holds ultimate accountability for policy implementation and compliance
Director of People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote awareness

Document Name: Participation of Students and Volunteers Policy	Next Review Date: August 2026	Document Version: 7.0
Document Owner: Director of ECE	File Location: Inside Play Resources Policy and Procedure	Release date: July 2014 Page 3 of 7

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversee policy governance, implementation and compliance
Area Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop guidelines in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director and Educators for accepting applications from volunteers/students to work at the service Accept or reject a potential volunteer/student based on the circumstances of the service at the time, in consultation with the Nominated Supervisor/Centre Director Ensure children being educated and cared for by the service are adequately supervised, and the legislated Educator-to-child ratios are complied with at all times Support Nominated Supervisors/Centre Directors to develop a range of strategies to enable and encourage the participation and involvement of parents/guardians at the service Develop an induction checklist for volunteers/students attending the service
Nominated Supervisors / Centre Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure, where required, the Working with Children Check (WWCC) has been read/sighted prior to the volunteer's/student's commencement at the service and checked for currency/amendments Ensure a volunteer/student record contains information for all volunteers/students attending the service with details of name, address, date of birth, days and hours of participation and details of the Working with Children Check (WWCC), ensuring that volunteers/students and are adequately supervised at all times, and that the health, safety and wellbeing of children at the service is protected Ensure that volunteers/students are not left with sole supervision of individual children or groups of children Providing volunteers/students with access to all service policies and procedures, and a copy of the <i>Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011</i> Ensuring that volunteers/students comply with the National Regulations and all service policies and procedures, including the Code of Conduct Policy, while attending the service

Document Name: Participation of Students and Volunteers Policy	Next Review Date: August 2026	Document Version: 7.0
Document Owner: Director of ECE	File Location: Inside Play Resources Policy and Procedure	Release date: July 2014 Page 4 of 7

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring strategies are in place to enable and encourage the participation and involvement of parents/guardians at the service • Assisting the approved provider to develop an induction checklist for volunteers/students at the service • Ensuring that volunteers/students have completed an induction checklist.
Educators, Volunteers, Students on Placement, and Contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure they have provided all details required to complete the 4.4.1 and 4.4.2 records • Undertake a Working with Children Check (WWCC) and present a current WWCC card or other notification, as applicable (unless their child is part of the group/activity) • Understand and acknowledge the requirement for confidentiality of all information relating to educators and families within the service • Comply with the requirements of the <i>Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011</i> and with all service policies and procedures, including the Code of Conduct Policy • Undertake the induction process and complete the induction checklist prior to commencement at the service • Follow the directions of staff at the service at all times to ensure that the health, safety and wellbeing of children is protected
Volunteer/Student Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan the volunteer's/student's specific duties and tasks in collaboration with the volunteer/student, (4.4.2 Volunteer Agreed Duties) other relevant team members and where appropriate children and families (template provided at the end of this document) • Provide regular constructive feedback to the volunteer/student • Address as early as possible any concerns regarding unsatisfactory performance of the volunteer/student in a constructive and respectful manner • Ensure that the volunteer/student is directly supervised whenever children are present • Ensure that the volunteer/student is not included in Educator to child ratio • Provide volunteers/ students with an induction to the service by the Nominated Supervisor and /or

Document Name: Participation of Students and Volunteers Policy	Next Review Date: August 2026	Document Version: 7.0
Document Owner: Director of ECE	File Location: Inside Play Resources Policy and Procedure	Release date: July 2014 Page 5 of 7

	designated volunteer/Student Supervisor on the first day of attendance
Parents/Guardians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure they are aware of and comply with all relevant service policies and procedures, including those related to supervision, child safety, and confidentiality • Responsible for providing all necessary information about their child to the service, particularly regarding any specific health, allergy, or dietary requirements, to ensure the child's safety and well-being

Related Legislation, Regulations and Resources

- Education and Care Services National Law 2010
- Education and Care National Regulations 2011: 84, 85, 90, 97, 149, 168, 170, 299D, 358
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)
- Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic)
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)
- Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)
- Child Safe Standards (Victoria) - Standard 6
- National Quality Standard (NQS) Quality Area 4: Staffing Arrangements

Related Policies and Procedures

- Child Health and Hygiene Policy
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Complaints and Feedback Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Excursion/Regular Outing Policy
- Interactions with Children Policy
- Parent Involvement and Participation Policy
- Privacy and Confidential Information Policy
- Supervision of Children Policy

Supporting Procedures

- Participation of Students and Volunteers Procedure

Supporting Documents

- Volunteer or Student Record

Document Name: Participation of Students and Volunteers Policy	Next Review Date: August 2026	Document Version: 7.0
Document Owner: Director of ECE	File Location: Inside Play Resources Policy and Procedure	Release date: July 2014 Page 6 of 7

- Volunteer Agreed Duties Template

Document Version History			
Version	Reason for Amendment	Approved by	Approval date
7.0	Policy reviewed and updated	ECMS Executive	August 2025

Document Name: Participation of Students and Volunteers Policy	Next Review Date: August 2026	Document Version: 7.0
Document Owner: Director of ECE	File Location: Inside Play Resources Policy and Procedure	Release date: July 2014 Page 7 of 7

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