PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS AND VOLUNTEERS POLICY

QUALITY AREA <4> | PEOPLE

PURPOSE

This policy provides clear guidelines for ECMS to:

- Ensure all students and volunteers participate safely and ethically in our programs.
- Maintain full compliance with the National law and regulations.
- Support high-quality learning environments through safe and meaningful engagement of students and volunteers.
- Foster strong partnerships with tertiary institutions to create opportunities for students to complete practicum placements as part of their studies.

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, 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 take up the ethical challenge of learning how to live well together and to flourish with difference. We celebrate family and cultural diversity and are committed to creating safe, inclusive and respectful environments where all children, families and communities are valued. We have zero tolerance of racism and zero tolerance of harm and abuse to children. This policy is underpinned by the principles of quality teaching and learning, child safety, respect, responsibility, and inclusion.

Students and volunteers enrich our programs and community connections. Their participation will always prioritise the safety, wellbeing, and rights of children.

All students and volunteers must meet mandatory requirements under the *Education and Care Services National Law Act* (2010) and *National Regulations* 2011, including child safety training, identity verification and ongoing workforce record updates.

POLICY PRINCIPLES

The following principles underpin all ECMS policies:

- Our policies reflect our purpose
- We use evidence to guide decisions
- Our policies are clear, accessible and purposeful
- Safety, equity and inclusion are non-negotiable
- We are accountable, transparent and always learning

Alongside ECMS's overarching principles, the following principles provide specific guidance for this policy:

- Student and volunteer participation must enrich the learning environment.
- All engagement must comply with the *National Law Act* 2010 and *National Regulations* 2011.
- Students and volunteers must always be supervised and never included in educator-to-child ratios.

POLICY

Place Based Engagement and Program Alignment

- Each service must assess proposed student and volunteer placements in the context of their local community, service needs, and curriculum priorities.
- Service teams must ensure that any student or volunteer engagement aligns with the approved educational program, supports planned learning outcomes, and contributes positively to the service's practice and operations.
- Decisions regarding placements must reflect consideration of the service's place-based needs.

National Early Childhood Worker Register

- ECMS must record and maintain workforce information for all individuals working in our services, including students and volunteers.

Mandatory National Child Safety Training

- All volunteers and students must complete the national child safety training before or at the commencement of placement.

Working with Children Check (WWCC)

- All students and volunteers must hold a valid WWCC (unless explicitly exempt). The WWCC must be verified and recorded before commencement.

Supervision Requirements

- Students and volunteers must always be directly supervised.
- They may not be left alone with children.
- They are not counted toward educator-to-child ratios.

Induction Requirements

- All students and volunteers must:
  - Complete ECMS induction, including child safety, emergency procedures, and conduct expectations.
  - Receive written guidance on their duties and expected conduct.

Documentation & Record-Keeping

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

Monitoring, Review and Continuous Improvement

ECMS reviews and assess this policy for effectiveness, adequacy and relevance every three years, or earlier if legislation, Child Safe Standards, or organisational priorities change. The review and update process will be aligned to legislative and regulatory changes, and interim updates may be made sooner, if significant changes occur, with regard to new regulatory obligations, audit findings, or organisational structure. Feedback from children, families, educators, and leaders informs learning and opportunities for continuous improvement to inform training, practice improvement and policy review. Insights are used to strengthen and implement improvement strategies through practice and systems, ensuring children remain safe, seen and heard.

BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

BACKGROUND

Under the *National Law and Regulations*, early childhood services are required to ensure the safety, wellbeing, and protection of children by complying with the *Education and Care Services National Law* 2010 and *National Regulations* 2011. This includes meeting mandatory child-safety obligations, verifying Working with Children Checks, maintaining accurate workforce and visitor records, and ensuring all students and volunteers complete required national child safety training. Services must also provide proper induction, uphold supervision requirements (including ensuring students and volunteers are never counted in ratios), and maintain compliance with relevant legislation and standards including the National Quality Standard and Child Safe Standards.

LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Education and Care Services National Law Act (2010) and Regulations 2011 (Vic)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic) - Sections 39, 40, 41, 42 and 43
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Vic)
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)
- Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic)

- Worker Screening Regulation 2021 (Vic)
- Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic) and Regulations 2006 (Vic)
- National Quality Standards - Quality Area 4 – Staffing Arrangements
- Child Safe Standards (Vic) - Standard 6

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- **Victorian Legislation** – Victorian Law Today: www.legislation.vic.gov.au
- **Commonwealth Legislation** – Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au

SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

SOURCES

- ACECQA: Staffing Policy Guidelines
- Australian Department of Education: Early childhood and care laws
- Victorian Department of Education: Early Childhood Workforce Register

ECMS FRAMEWORKS

- Assurance Framework
- Compliance Management Framework
- Policy Governance Framework
- Risk Management Framework

RELATED POLICIES

- Acceptable Use of IT and Online Safety Policy
- Child Health and Hygiene Policy
- Child Participation, Inclusion and Cultural Safety Policy
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Complaints & Feedback Policy
- Interactions with Children Policy
- Nutrition, Food, Beverages and Dietary Requirements Policy
- Parent Involvement and Participation Policy
- Privacy and Confidential Information Policy
- Supervision of Children Policy

RELATED PROCEDURES

- Participation of Students and Volunteers Procedure

EVALUATION

To assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, ECMS will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness

- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notify all stakeholders affected by this policy at least 14 days before making any significant changes to this policy or its procedure, unless a lesser period is necessary due to risk *(Regulation 172 (2))*.

APPENDICES

- **Appendix 1**: Roles & Responsibilities
- **Appendix 2**: Definitions

ATTACHMENTS

- Volunteer or Student Record
- Student and Volunteer Intak Form
- Student and Volunteer Induction Checklist

DOCUMENT VERSION HISTORY

Document Version History			
Version	**Reason for Amendment**	**Approved by**	**Review date**
8.0	Policy updated (re: Workforce Register)	ECMS Executive	March 2027

APPENDIX 1: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This section outlines the key roles and responsibilities required to implement and uphold this policy.

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES
Approved Provider/ Executive Team	• Oversee policy governance, implementation and compliance. • Ensure systems are in place to implement this policy consistently across all ECMS services. • Provide resources, training, and support to services. • Ensure organisation-wide compliance with workforce register requirements. • Ensure child safety obligations are implemented.
Director of People	• Oversee policy governance, workforce data management and compliance.
Area Managers	• Support Nominated Supervisors and Centre Directors to consider engagements of volunteers and students based on the circumstances of the service at the time. • 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.
Nominated Supervisors / Centre Directors	• 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 the personal details required and details of the Working with Children Check (WWCC), ensuring that volunteers/students and are always supervised, and that the health, safety and wellbeing of children and staff at the service is protected. • Share all required information of the student/ volunteer to the People team to comply with the requirements of the National Workforce Register. • Ensure that the student/ volunteer has completed mandatory child safety training prior or upon to commencement. • Ensure that volunteers/students are not left with sole supervision of individual children or groups of children. • Provide volunteers/students with access to all service policies and procedures, and a copy of the

	Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011. • Ensure that volunteers/students comply with the National Regulations and all service policies and procedures, including the Code of Conduct Policy, while attending the service • Ensure strategies are in place to enable and encourage the participation and involvement of parents/guardians at the service. • Ensure that volunteers/students have completed an induction checklist.
Volunteer/Student Supervisors (Early Childhood Teachers & Educators)	• Plan the volunteer's/student's specific duties and tasks in collaboration with the volunteer/student, other relevant team members and where appropriate children and families. • 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 designated volunteer/Student Supervisor on the first day of attendance.
Students on Placement, Volunteers and Contractors	• Complete mandatory national child safety training prior or upon commencement. • Ensure they have provided all details required to complete staff records and national workforce register requirements • Undertake a Working with Children Check (WWCC) and present a current WWCC card or other notification. • Understand and acknowledge the requirement for confidentiality of all information relating to educators and families within the service. • Comply with the requirements of the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 and with all service policies and procedures, including the Code of Conduct. • 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.

APPENDIX 2: DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms, refer to the Definitions file of the ECMS Policy Catalogue.

Term	Definition
Approved Provider	The person or entity approved under the *Education and Care Services National Law 2010* to operate an education and care service.
Educator-to-Child Ratio	The required number of educators for a specific number of children in a service, as outlined in the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011. 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.