



ARDOCH

REALISING CHILDREN'S POTENTIAL  
THROUGH EDUCATION

# Ardoch

## Workplace Coordinator Guide



## Literacy Buddies



[www.ardoch.org.au](http://www.ardoch.org.au)



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# Introduction

Literacy Buddies® has been enriching the lives of vulnerable students for over 10 years and it's all because of the incredible volunteers just like you who have committed to making a difference in their community.

This year, we're incredibly excited to work with you and your workplace volunteers to create real change in children's lives.

Whether your company has been partnering with Ardoch for years, or whether this is the very first program you're participating in, we want to say a big thank you for sharing your valuable time with us.

We've crafted this document to guide you through the ins and outs of the Literacy Buddies® program and the crucial part you play within it. We've also included some resources to help set you up for success.

At Ardoch, child safety is our number one priority. We ask you to please read through the entirety of this document to understand what's required of you and your workplace volunteers to ensure that child safety is upheld at every stage of this program.

If you have any questions, we're always here to help! In this document, you'll find the contact details of your Ardoch program coordinators.



# The Literacy Buddies® Program

Literacy Buddies® pairs volunteers with classrooms across Australia, aiming to improve the literacy and language skills of children and youth facing disadvantage. Students (Little Buddies) are matched with volunteers (Big Buddies) and exchange a total of six letters from Term 2 to Term 4, giving them the opportunity to practice their writing and reading skills, build their interpersonal skills and have fun!

Two visits will also take place during the school year to give Big and Little Buddies a chance to interact in person. A school visit will take place at the beginning of the program, while a workplace visit will conclude the program.



### How does it make a difference?

Education plays a crucial role in living a happy, healthy and fulfilled life. It helps us understand who we are and how we fit into our community and the world at large. But while every Australian child receives an education, not everyone leaves school with their best foot forward.

Thanks to a range of Australian studies, we've been able to uncover a link between the socio-economic status of students and their educational outcomes. One in three children in Australia's most disadvantaged communities start school developmentally vulnerable and continue to fall behind as they progress through their education.

We know that this can have a long lasting impact on students, so we set out on a mission to change the trajectory of students' lives, and we can't do it alone.

The Literacy Buddies program was created to support students at risk of struggling in the classroom with the help of our incredible volunteers. Not only does this program provide an opportunity to enhance learning outcomes and build confidence, but it also allows students to interact with successful working role models to help broaden their aspirations.

"My favourite thing was receiving letters and sending off letters to my big buddy, I get to write letters to an adult."  
- Student





# Your Role

Our workplace volunteer coordinators are at the centre of our Literacy Buddies® program, operating as the bridge between Ardoch and workplace volunteers.

This pivotal role requires a commitment of around 40 hours across nine months or three school terms. In this role, you'll need your coordination skills, interpersonal skills, time management, and communication. You will be able to make a real difference in students' lives.



"We went to the city to see our buddy. The view of the city was incredible. The buildings were amazing. I had so much fun with my buddy. I wish we could do this one more time".

- Student

## Your responsibilities include:

- Acting as Ardoch's main point of contact
- Recruiting workplace volunteers (Big Buddies)
- Overseeing the successful training and child safety compliance of Big Buddies
- Acting as the main point of contact for Big Buddies, and supporting them through the program
- Ensuring the letter exchanges operate smoothly and within the allotted timeframes
- Coordinating the school and workplace visits and any relevant transportation and catering
- Notifying the Ardoch program coordinators of any child safety concerns.
- Support the evaluation of the program by completing the evaluation survey and encouraging your peers to do the same.

68% of students surveyed for Literacy Buddies felt more confident with writing after the program

\*According to a 2023 survey



# Need help?



As a workplace volunteer coordinator, your role helps ensure the success of our program. But you're not alone – we're here to help you every step of the way.

## Website

If you're looking for more information about the Literacy Buddies® program or child safety compliance, our Workplace coordinators page may be able to help you!

## Your Ardoch program coordinators

If you'd prefer to speak with a team member from Ardoch, Claire Lawson (they/them) and Charlie Goldberg (she/her) are ready to help out!

You can contact them via telephone or email during business hours:

Email: [literacybuddies@ardoch.org.au](mailto:literacybuddies@ardoch.org.au)

Phone: 03 9537 2414 or 1300 ARDOCH

## Additional support

Alongside our website and Ardoch program coordinators, we'll also organise regular online catch-ups to check in with you.

“The little buddies visited our offices a couple of weeks ago, they were chatty and happy and were interested about the job we do. A few of them were eager to know what we do and how they can aspire to be there. It was very heartwarming to see that our interaction with them has made a positive difference in their lives.”

- Workplace Volunteer





# A step by step guide

Step 1: Get Child Safe	Step 2: Recruit!	Step 3: Get Big Buddies Child Safe
<p>The first task on your to-do list is to get child safe! <a href="#">Ardoch Training Portal</a></p> <p>That means receiving your Working With Children's Check, National Criminal History Check via Ardoch, and an International Criminal History Check if you've lived overseas for 12 months or more in the past 10 years.</p> <p>Next, step is to complete your online child safety training through <a href="#">your Ardoch portal</a>.</p>	<p>Start recruiting as soon as you can. Child safety checks can take a while, so the sooner the team starts the process the better.</p> <p>We have drafted an email for your use as well as produced some flyers and ads for your workplace newsletters.</p> <p>Prospective volunteers can complete <a href="#">an online application form on our website</a>.</p> <p>An Ardoch program coordinator will keep you updated on how recruitment is going and when you've hit your intake goal.</p>	<p>As soon as someone signs up to be a Big Buddy, they'll receive an email to complete their child safety checks.</p> <p>Legally, they cannot be part of the Literacy Buddies® program until they've received their safety checks and they've completed their online child safety training.</p> <p>An Ardoch program coordinator will keep you updated on the status of the safety checks, and it'll be up to you to ensure these are applied for and completed in a timely manner.</p>
Step 4: Kick off the Program	Step 5: Oversee Letter Exchanges	Step 6: Coordinate School and Workplace Visits
<p>Once every Big Buddy is successfully child safe, that's when the fun begins!</p> <p>Your Ardoch program coordinator will pair Big and Little Buddies together and set the dates of the letter exchanges and visits.</p> <p>They'll confirm all the details and leave it to you to get the Big Buddies ready for their first exchange.</p>	<p>You'll be in charge of ensuring every Big Buddy completes their child-safe letter and digitally uploads it to a joint filing system before the allocated deadline.</p> <p>You'll also be tasked with distributing letters from Little Buddies to their Big Buddies.</p> <p>Sometimes, Little Buddies can have a lot on their plates, resulting in missed letter exchanges. If this happens, let an Ardoch program coordinator know and together we can find the best way forward.</p>	<p>Lastly, you'll be in charge of organising the school and workplace visits.</p> <p>For the school visit, that includes confirming dates and coordinating Big Buddy attendance and transportation.</p> <p>For the workplace visit, that includes providing available dates, coordinating activities, ensuring Big Buddy attendance and arranging catering for the day.</p>



# Child Safety

Child safety is at the core of what we do, and as a volunteer who will work closely with vulnerable children and young people, it's at the core of your role and responsibilities, too.

Children have a right to be kept safe at all times, so we have a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of child abuse.

We know that some children are more vulnerable than others. That's why we actively promote the safety and wellbeing of children and young people who:

- are from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- have a disability
- identify as LGBTQIA+.

Everyone who works with or represents Ardoch is responsible for ensuring that children are safe, feel safe, and are involved in decisions that affect their lives.

Some of the ways we uphold child safety includes:

- legally requiring staff and volunteers to attain a Working With Children Check and National Criminal History Check and International Criminal History Check (if applicable) before commencing their roles
- requiring volunteers to complete child safety training before entering the program
- screening letter exchanges between students and workplace volunteers, and redacting or following up on any sensitive information that may be present.

This does mean that all volunteers who have contact with volunteers must have a working with children check and to complete an online training module on child safety. Volunteers who will engage with children more than three times also need a police check.

Although the training needs to be done every year (for all staff and volunteers). Volunteers who have volunteered previously do not need to repeat their working with children check, police checks need to be repeated every three years. (sworn police officers are exempt)



# Tips

Our Literacy Buddies® program has been successfully running for many years, which means we have plenty of tips to help you thrive in your new role! Here are a few recommendations to make the process easier.

## **Start recruiting ASAP**

Recruiting a class-size equivalent number of volunteers can take time, so we recommend spreading the word early.

This way, the sooner we hit our recruitment goal, the sooner the program can begin! Ideally, our aim is to have the program up and running by the middle of Term 2.

During this process, look for potential volunteers who you know can commit for the whole 9 months – this helps ensure turnover is minimised or avoided during the program.

## **Get creative on how you spread the word**

From bulk emails, internal newsletters and noticeboard flyers to conversations around the water cooler, utilise all the internal communication systems available in your workplace to help you promote the Literacy Buddies® program.

We have a range of resources to help make the recruitment process easier for you, from flyers to email templates. Feel free to personalise assets like email templates to garner better results.

If your workplace has designated volunteer hours, let your volunteers know about this opportunity!

## **Direct tricky questions to us!**

If someone is interested in being a Big Buddy and they have a number of questions you aren't sure how to answer, we're here to help!

Provide them with the contact details of our Ardoch program coordinators and we'll help guide them through the ins and outs of the program.

## **Encourage Big Buddies to complete their compliance ASAP**

Receiving child safety checks can take some time, so the best way to speed the process up is to have volunteers apply for their Working With Children's Check, National Criminal History Check, and International Criminal History Check (if applicable) as soon as possible.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## How many Big Buddies do I need to recruit?

The amount of big buddies you require will depend on the classroom size you're paired with. Generally, we'll aim for around 25 volunteers. If that's not possible, your Ardoch program coordinators will help you find the best way forward.

## Can I be a Big Buddy and a Workplace Volunteer Coordinator?

You sure can! If you feel like you can complete both roles simultaneously, then we welcome you to do so.

## Does everyone need to apply for the child safety checks?

Ardoch staff and volunteers are legally required to comply with child safety policies and procedures, which includes obtaining a Working With Children Check and National Criminal History check if you haven't already.

You won't need to reapply for these checks if you've done so recently (within the last three years), or if you're a sworn police officer.

## If someone has volunteered with Ardoch in the past, do they need to reapply to participate again?

If someone's volunteered with Ardoch from 2022 onwards and they're interested in volunteering again, they won't need to reapply from scratch. Their information will still be in the Ardoch portal and all they'll need to do is complete a refresher training module.

## When does the Literacy Buddies® Program run?

This program runs from Term 2 to Term 4. However, when your program starts depends on how quickly your new volunteer recruits can complete their child safety compliance.





# Important Links

Workplace Coordinator Resources – <https://www.ardoch.org.au/workplace-coordinator-resources/>

Application Form – <https://www.ardoch.org.au/workplace-volunteer-application/>

Volunteer Training Portal – <https://ardoch2.my.site.com/volunteers/s/>

Workplace Volunteer Resources – <https://www.ardoch.org.au/workplace-volunteering/>

# Ardoch Program Coordinator Contacts

Claire Lawson (they/them) and Charlie Goldberg (she/her)

Email: [literacybuddies@ardoch.org.au](mailto:literacybuddies@ardoch.org.au)

Phone: 03 9537 2414 or 1300 ARDOCH

Address: Level 4, 85 Queen Street Melbourne VIC 3000.





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