



Sacred Heart
College
GEELONG

CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT

Context

Central to the mission of Sacred Heart College Geelong is an explicit commitment to providing a safe and supportive environment where the emotional, social, intellectual, spiritual and physical wellbeing of our students is a priority.

All students enrolled at the College have the right to feel safe and be safe. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our priority, and we do not and will not tolerate child abuse. We aim to create a child-safe and child-friendly environment where children are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety.

Purpose

This Code of Conduct has a specific focus on promoting child safety and wellbeing in the school environment and safeguarding children and young people at the College against sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse or neglect. It is intended to complement other professional and occupational codes.

Scope

All workplace participants, clergy and board/school council members at Sacred Heart College Geelong are expected to actively contribute to a school culture by respecting the dignity of its members, affirming the gospel values of love, care for others, compassion and justice. They are required to observe child-safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as noted below. All College Advisory Council members, the Principal and all other staff, volunteers, contractors and clergy must sign and abide by this Code of Conduct.

Workplace participants: *All College employees, contractors, consultants, students on placement and volunteers (hereafter referred to as Workplace Participants), both inside and outside of the workplace.*

Acceptable Behaviours

All workplace participants are responsible for supporting the safety of children by:



Educating Girls to Make a Difference

A Ministry of Mercy Education Limited ABN 69 154 531 870

- adhering to the College's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and upholding the CECVs Commitment Statement to Child Safety, which the College adopts, at all times
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- adhering to the Student Positive Behaviour Policy
- treating everyone in the College community with respect
- taking into account the needs of all children and students
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children – particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child's self-identification)
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero-tolerance for discrimination)
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, during personal care activities)
- paying particular attention to the needs of students with disability, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students who are unable to live at home, international students and lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) students
- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not alone with a child. Where this is unavoidable, ensuring appropriate safety measures are in place and records taken
- reporting any allegations of child abuse to the Principal or Deputy Principal - Student Engagement, Development and Empowerment (designated Child Safety and Wellbeing Officer) or member of the College Leadership Team
- reporting any child safety concerns to the Principal or Deputy Principal - Student Engagement, Development and Empowerment (designated Child Safety and Wellbeing Officer) or member of the College Leadership Team
- understanding and complying with all reporting obligations as they relate to mandatory reporting and reporting under the *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.)*
- understanding and complying with all obligations as they relate to the reportable conduct scheme including reporting allegations of reportable conduct in accordance with the school's reportable conduct policy
- ensuring as quickly as possible that the child is safe if an allegation of child abuse is made reporting to the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) any charges, committals for trial or convictions in relation to a sexual offence by a registered teacher, or specific allegations or concerns about a registered teacher
- ensuring they comply with any and all applicable professional or occupational codes of conduct
- encouraging children to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant College activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.



Unacceptable Behaviours

All workplace participants must not:

- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse
- develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children)
- exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example, inappropriate sitting on laps)
- put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors)
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves (for example, toileting or changing clothes)
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities)
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
- discriminate against any child, including because of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or disability
- work with children while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- have contact with a child or their family outside school without the school leadership's or child safety officer's knowledge and/or consent or the school governing authority's approval (for example, unauthorised after-hours tutoring, private instrumental/other lessons or sport coaching); accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is appropriate
- have any online contact with a child (including by social media, email, instant messaging) or their family unless necessary (for example, providing families with eNewsletters or assisting students with their schoolwork)
- use any personal communication channels/devices such as a personal email account
- exchange personal contact details such as phone numbers, social networking sites or email addresses with a student or their family
- where a staff member (including volunteers and those providing religious ministry) have existing relationships outside of school with students and / or families this should be made known to the principal.
- photograph or video a child without the consent of families
- consume illegal drugs at school or at school events in the presence of children
- consume alcohol when responsible for the supervision and care of students.
- consume alcohol at school or at school events in the presence of students with limited exceptions that must be approved by the principal and school advisory council, such as when a school has a VET commercial hospitality venue or at a Year 12 Graduation event where parents / guardians/ carers are present and responsible for their children



Teachers

Teachers are also required to abide by the principles relating to relationships with students as set out in the Victorian Teaching Profession's Code of Conduct published by the VIT. These principles include:

- knowing their students well, respecting their individual differences and catering for their individual abilities
- working to create an environment which promotes mutual respect
- modelling and engaging in respectful and impartial language
- protecting students from intimidation, embarrassment, humiliation and harm
- respecting a student's privacy in sensitive matters
- interacting with students without displaying bias or preference
- not violating or compromising the unique position that a teacher holds of influence and trust in their relationship with students.

College Counsellors, Social Workers, Psychologists And College Pastoral Workers

In their dealings with students, College Counsellors, Social Workers, Psychologists, Occupational Therapists and Pastoral Care Workers should also take into account their professional obligations as set out in a code of ethics or practice to which they are bound, including because of their membership of:

- The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency
- The Australian Psychological Society
- The Australian Association of Social Workers
- National School Wellbeing Program
- Australian Counselling Association
- Occupational Therapy Australia
- Speech Pathology Australia.

The professional obligations of School Counsellors, Psychologists, Social Workers, Occupational Therapists and Pastoral Care Workers as set out in the professional codes to which they are bound are overridden by their obligations as employees of the College, as noted in clause 25.3 of Independent Schools Council of Australia and National Catholic Education Commission's Privacy Compliance Manual.

Sports And Recreation

Workplace participants, coaches, families and community members involved in coaching, training or assisting students during sporting and recreation activities should adopt practices that assist children to feel safe and protected, including:

- using positive reinforcement and not abusive, harassing or discriminatory language
- coaching students to be 'good sports'
- explaining the reason for the contact and asking for the student's permission if physical contact with a student by a coach or other adult is necessary during a sporting or other recreational activity



- avoiding, where possible, situations where an adult may be alone with a student such as in a dressing or change room, first aid room, dormitory or when the student needs to be transported in a vehicle.

First Aid Officers

First Aid Officers have a responsibility for maintaining their professional and personal boundaries when providing care to an individual. The care provided by First Aid Officers is likely to involve personal physical contact with a student, such as touching and holding. In particular, First Aid Officers are expected to:

- practise in accordance with the standards of their profession
- respect the dignity, culture, ethnicity, values and beliefs of people receiving care and treatment
- treat personal information obtained in a professional capacity as private and confidential
- promote and preserve the trust and privilege inherent in their relationship with those in their care.

Clergy or other persons involved in religious ministry

Clergy and other persons involved in religious ministry in schools abide by the commitments in the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne Statement of Commitment, published by the Professional Standards Unit of the Vicar General's Office in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, to safeguard children and young people from abuse

Breaches to the Code

Where a workplace participant is suspected of breaching this Code of Conduct, the College may start the process under clause 13 of the Catholic Education Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2022 (CEMEA): Diocese of Ballarat, Diocese of Sandhurst, Archdiocese of Melbourne and Lavalla Catholic College Traralgon for managing employment concerns. This may result in disciplinary consequences.

Where the Principal is suspected of breaching this Code of Conduct, the concerned party is advised to contact the Chief Executive of Mercy Education Limited (MEL).

Where any other member of the College community, including volunteers and contractors, is suspected of breaching this code, the College is to take appropriate action, including (if applicable) in accordance with the *PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools* policy. In appropriate cases, a breach may be referred to Victoria Police and/or a regulatory body, such as the VIT.

Acknowledgement

By observing this code of conduct, you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to the Principal, member of the College Leadership Team or People and Capability. If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse, phone 000.

In electronically signing this document, you are confirming that you agree to abide by this Code of Conduct.



Version Control

Date Approved: 28 March 2024

Name: Anna Negro, Principal

Signature: 

Date presented at Advisory Council Meeting: 27 March 2024

Sponsor: Leader of People and Capability

Person responsible for implementation: Leader of People and Capability

Reviewed by:

- School Committee: N/A
- Sub Committee of the College Council: N/A
- Student Leadership House Focus Team: N/A

Location checklist:

- The Hub
- Student Space
- Parent Portal
- Website

VERSION HISTORY

Version	Date approved	Next review
1.0	Aug 2016 (creation)	2017
2.0	Mar 2017 (update)	2018
3.0	Aug 2018 (update)	2019
4.0	Jun 2019 (update)	2020
5.0	Jun 2020 (update)	2021
6.0	Apr 2021 (update)	2022
7.0	Jun 2022 (update)	2023
8.0	Apr 2023 (update)	2024
9.0	Mar 2024	2025

