



CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY

1. Purpose

- 1.1 St Catherine's School is committed to being a Child Safe organisation and embedding a child safe culture into our practices and processes to ensure that all children who attend the School are safe at all times. All children regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability sexual orientation, or family or social background have equal rights to protection from abuse. St Catherine's School is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and to provide a safe environment for children with a disability.
- 1.2 St Catherine's School has zero tolerance for child abuse and all staff employed by St Catherine's School are responsible for the care and protection of the children within our care and to report information about suspected child abuse.
- 1.3 This policy exists to provide a framework to ensure that St Catherine's School is able to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken so that students are safe.
- 1.4 The Child Safety Code of Conduct Policy outlines a commitment by the School to ensure that all staff, volunteers and members of School Council observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children as noted below. All such personnel will be required to sign a copy of the Child Safety Code of Conduct to acknowledge they have read and understood it, and agree to abide by it.
- 1.5 Failure to observe the Child Safety Code of Conduct is considered misconduct (or in some cases Reportable Conduct) and appropriate disciplinary action may be taken. Disciplinary action may include suspension while matters are investigated and could ultimately result in dismissal.

2. Scope

- 2.1 Every person engaged in paid or voluntary child-related work with St Catherine's School is required to adhere to this Child Safety Code of Conduct. This includes teaching staff, non-teaching staff, coaches, contractors, third party providers, volunteers and School Council members.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 **Aboriginal child:** A person under the age of 18 who:
 - a. is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent
 - b. identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and
 - c. is accepted as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community.
- 3.2 **Child abuse:** For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, abuse constitutes any act committed against a child involving:
 - a. physical violence
 - b. sexual offences
 - c. serious emotional or psychological abuse
 - d. serious neglect.



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- 3.3 Children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds:** A child or young person who identifies as having particular cultural or linguistic affiliations by virtue of their place of birth, ancestry or ethnic origin, religion, preferred language or language spoken at home or because of their parents' identification on a similar basis.
- 3.4 Child:** A person who is under the age of 18 years.
- 3.5 Child safety:** In the context of the child safe standards, child safety means measures to protect children from abuse.
- 3.6 Child safe organisation:** In the context of the child safe standards, a child safe organisation is one that meets the child safe standards by proactively taking measures to protect children from abuse.
- 3.7 Cultural competency:** A set of congruent behaviours, attitudes and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals that enable them to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.
- 3.8 Cultural abuse:** Actions and attitudes that deliberately ignore, denigrate or attack the culture of a person or community.
- 3.9 Cultural safety for Aboriginal children:** The positive recognition and celebration of cultures. It is more than just the absence of racism or discrimination, and more than cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity.
- 3.10 Victorian Child Safe Standards:** To create and maintain a child safe organisation, all staff must be aware of the School's obligations to implement the following standards outlined in Ministerial Order 870:
- strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, through effective leadership arrangements;
 - a Child Safe Policy;
 - a Code of Conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children;
 - screening, supervision, training and other human resource practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel;
 - processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse;
 - strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse;
 - strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.
- 3.11 School Environment:** Any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:
- a campus of the school;
 - online school environments (including email and intranet systems); and
 - other locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events.



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4. Policy Statement

4.1 The Principal will:

- a. Be responsible for the overall welfare and wellbeing of staff and volunteers;
- b. Be accountable for managing and maintaining a duty of care towards staff and volunteers; and
- c. Nominate Child Protection Officers to provide information and support to all staff, volunteers, children, young people and their carers regarding child protection matters.

Child Safety Officers:

- Ms Sarah Bethune, Head of ELC
- Mrs Karen McCardle, Head of Junior School
- Ms Merran O'Connor, Deputy Principal: Student Wellbeing
- Ms Amelia King, School Counsellor

4.2 All staff, volunteers, contractors, third party providers, and School Council members must:

- a. Operate within the School policies and guidelines, upholding St Catherine's School's statement of Commitment to Child Safety in all School environments at all times;
- b. Establish and maintain a child-safe environment in the course of their work;
- c. Maintain a duty of care in programs and activities;
- d. Be responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children;
- e. Be fair, considerate and honest with others;
- f. Treat children and young people with respect and value their ideas and opinions;
- g. Act as positive role models in their conduct with children and young people.
- h. Be professional in their actions;
- i. Agree to cooperate with an investigation if an allegation is made against them;
- j. Maintain strict impartiality;
- k. Comply with specific organisational guidelines on physical contact with children;
- l. Respect the privacy of children, their families and teachers/carers, and only disclose information to people who have a need to know;
- m. Take all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse, leaving doors ajar where possible and always unlocked;
- n. Meet students in an open plan area, a room with high visibility or the School Library;
- o. Listen to and respond to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another;
- p. Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal child's self-identification);



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- q. Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination);
- r. Promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, during personal care activities);
- s. Report any child safety concerns to a St Catherine's School Child Safety Officer or the Principal;
- t. Report any allegations of child abuse to one of the St Catherine's School Child Safety Officers or the Principal, and ensure any allegation be reported to the police or Child Protection;
- u. If an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe;
- v. Encourage children to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them;
- w. Contact the police if a child is at immediate risk of abuse, phone 000.

4.3 No person shall:

- a. Shame, humiliate, oppress, belittle or degrade children or young people;
- b. Unlawfully discriminate against any child;
- c. Engage in any activity with a child or young person that is likely to physically or emotionally harm them;
- d. Initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person, or do things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves (such as toileting or changing clothes);
- e. Be alone with a child or young person unnecessarily and for more than a very short time;
- f. Meet students in a secluded area or lock doors. Ensure the setting has glass windows and/or glass panes in doors;
- g. Develop a 'special' relationship with a specific child or young person, for their own needs;
- h. Show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention;
- i. Arrange contact, including online contact, with children or young people outside of the organisation's programs and activities;
- j. Have contact with a child or their family outside of our organisation without the Principal's knowledge and/or consent (for example, no babysitting or tutoring). Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is appropriate);
- k. Have any online or phone contact with a child or their family (use of the Portal, a school phone or school email for the purpose of educational or emergency communications is permitted);
- l. Photograph or video a child or young person without the consent of the child and his/her parents or guardians; (if required to photograph students or visiting



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students within the context of a school program on a personal device, photographs should be uploaded only to the Media File shared folder and immediately deleted from personal devices);

- m. Work with children or young people while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs;
- n. Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example personal relationships or social activities);
- o. Use inappropriate language in the presence of children;
- p. Transport a student in their car unless they have specific permission from the parents and the Principal as part of their professional role. In the event of an emergency, staff should attempt to obtain parental consent and also report the matter to a member of the Senior Leadership team, where possible prior to the journey commencing;
- q. Express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
- r. Discriminate against any child, including because of culture, race, ethnicity or disability;
- s. Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse;
- t. Do anything in contravention of the organisation's policies, procedures or this Code of Conduct.

4.4 **Some examples in relation to appropriate physical contact with students include:**

- a. assessing a student who is injured or ill may necessitate touching. An employee should advise the student of what they intend to do and, where possible, seek the student's consent;
- b. teaching sport, music and other activities may require the physical handling of a student to demonstrate a particular action or skill; and
- c. other physical contact with students which may be appropriate includes: comforting a distressed student; guiding a student in a non-threatening manner; gently tapping a student on the shoulder to gain her attention after verbal requests were unsuccessful; and protecting a student from imminent danger to himself or to others.

4.5 **By observing these standards you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to one of the St Catherine's School Child Safety Officers or the Principal.**

5. Breach of Policy

What Happens if You Breach this Code?

- 5.1 If you breach this Code of Conduct you will face disciplinary action, including and up to termination of employment or cessation of engagement with the organisation.

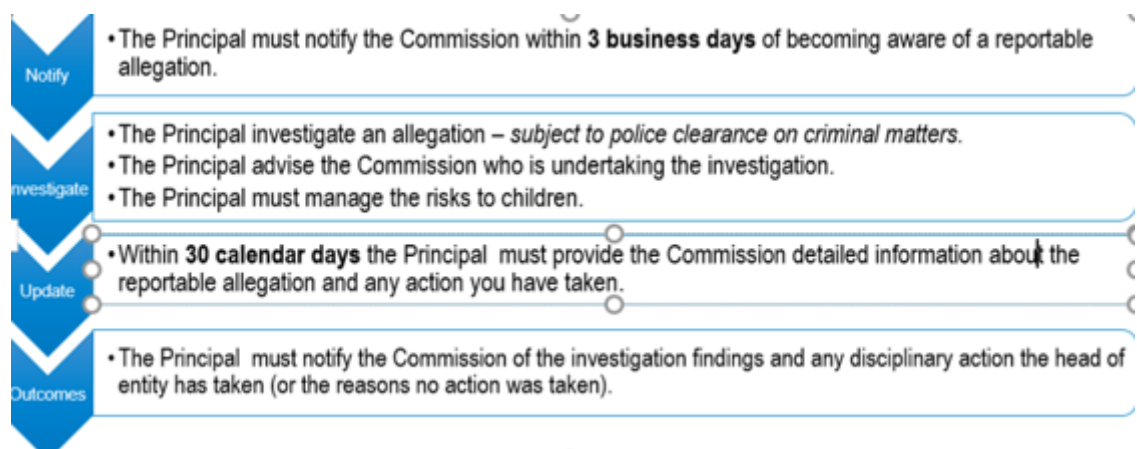


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- 5.2 In addition to any internal disciplinary proceedings, the School will report to the Victorian Institute of Teaching any conduct deemed to have violated its Codes of Conduct and Ethics. The School will report to the police all instances in which a breach of the law has, or may have, occurred.
- 5.3 Breach of this Policy shall be considered either misconduct, serious misconduct or gross misconduct (depending on the circumstances) and may result in disciplinary action which may lead to termination of employment.
- 5.4 If staff are aware of any potential breaches of policy that are advised to speak with either the Principal or a Child Safety Officer.

6. Reportable Conduct Scheme

- 6.1 The Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme scheme is administered by The Commission for Children and Young People and is designed to ensure that the Commission will be aware of every allegation of certain types of employee misconduct involving children in relevant organisations that exercise care, supervision and authority over children.
- 6.2 Staff must report, immediately, to a Child Safety Officer or the Principal, any breach of the Child Safety Code of Conduct arising from an action by an employee or volunteer within our organisation.
- 6.3 In response to any instance of 'serious' breaches which relate to abuse or neglect ('serious' being cases in which the abuse or neglect has resulted in, or is likely to result in, significant harm to a child or young person) the Principal will investigate and deal with allegations of inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour towards a child in line with the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme.





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7. Employment of New Personnel

- 7.1 St Catherine's School undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all workers and volunteers that aims to:
- promote and protect the safety of all children under the care of the organisation;
 - identify the safest and most suitable people who share St Catherine's School's values and commitment to protect children;
 - prevent a person from working at St Catherine's School if they pose a risk to children.
- 7.2 St Catherine's School requires all workers/volunteers to pass through the organisation's recruitment and screening processes prior to commencing their engagement with St Catherine's School, including obtaining and verifying Working with Children's Checks using the online validation 'Status Checker' tool
- 7.3 St Catherine's School may require applicants to provide a police check in accordance with the law and as appropriate, before they commence working at St Catherine's School and during their time with St Catherine's School at regular intervals.
- 7.4 St Catherine's School will undertake thorough reference and personal identity checks as per the approved internal procedure.
- 7.5 Newly appointed staff will undergo a Child Safety Induction.
- 7.6 Once engaged, workers/volunteers must review and acknowledge their understanding of this Policy and by agreeing to and signing the Child Safety Code of Conduct.

8. Boarding House Code of Conduct

- 8.1 In addition to the above expectations, students in out of home care require particular protection.
- 8.2 St Catherine's School recognises that the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse's Final Report identified specific groups of students being at heightened risk, including Boarders and International Students. Consistent with the requirements of the National Code 2018, VRQA Guidelines, and their intersection with the Child Safe Standards, the School is committed to mitigating risk for all students, with specific policy addressing the needs of these students.
- 8.3 St Catherine's School acknowledges its obligations to meet the provisions of Federal and State legislation; including the National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 (National Code 2018) and the VRQA Guidelines for Enrolment of Overseas Students aged under 18 years.
- 8.4 St Catherine's School implements risk management procedures to identify, assess and mitigate risk in the Boarding House and to develop strategies to embed a culture of child safety at the Boarding House.



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8.5 St Catherine's School implements risk management procedures to identify, assess and mitigate risk in the Homestay Accommodation and conducts stringent child safety screening of homestay families as outlined in the Homestay Policy.

8.6 The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse noted the following risks to Boarders:

- a. more opportunities for perpetrators to be alone with children
- b. no parents to turn to for protection
- c. little external oversight of the institutions
- d. lack of privacy and eroded personal boundaries
- e. lack of supervision, supervision can be delegated to older students
- f. students of different ages being housed together

8.7 Additional Risks include:

- a. visitors in the Boarding House
- b. language and cultural barriers may impede understanding and lead to misplaced trust of strangers
- c. Culturally and/or linguistically diverse students may also experience communication barriers when it comes to reporting abuse and seeking support

8.8 All staff and visitors to the Boarding House must:

- a. take particular care to respect the privacy and personal space of students
- b. sign in at the Reception desk upon arrival
- c. wear a Visitor lanyard (visiting teaching staff must wear school identification in the Boarding House)
- d. remain in the downstairs common area and not enter the student residential areas unless accompanied by a Boarding House Staff member
- e. ensure that doors remain open when with students in the lounge areas, study, laundry to ensure clear visibility

8.9 Third Party Providers

In addition to abiding by the above regulations:

- a. Tutors must tutor only in the common areas
- b. Tutors are only permitted in the Boarding House for the duration of the tutorial
- c. Communication with International students must go via the Boarding House staff when arranging tutoring times
- d. Contractors may not enter the building when students are present
- e. Catering staff can enter the Kitchen and Dining Room only



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9. Responsibility

- 9.1 All St Catherine's staff, volunteers, contractors, third party providers and members of School Council must abide by the School's Child Safety Code of Conduct
- 9.2 If clarification of this policy or related policies is required, staff should discuss the matter with the Human Resources Manager.

10. Compliance requirements

11. Federal

- a. Child Safety and Wellbeing Act 2005
- b. [National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 \(National Code 2018\)](#)

Victorian

- a. Education and Training Reform Amendment (Child Safe) Act 2015 (Vic)
- b. Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
- c. Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment Act 2015 (Vic)
- d. [Victorian Child Safe Standards](#)
- e. Ministerial Order 870
- f. [The Victorian Teaching Professional Code of Conduct](#)

12. Associated Documents

- a. Child Safety Policy
- b. Staff Code of Conduct
- c. Child Safe Strategy
- d. St Catherine's School Professional Guidelines for Teaching Staff
- e. [The Victorian Teaching Professional Code of Conduct](#)
- f. The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers
- g. Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy
- h. Community Code of Conduct
- i. Homestay Checklist
- j. *VRQA Guidelines for the Enrolment of Overseas Students under the age of 18 years*

13. Acceptance of Code of Conduct

I agree to adhere to this Code of Conduct and to report any Child Safety Concerns to the Principal or a nominated Child Safety Officer:

Name:

Role/Position:.....

Signature:

Date: