



Adopted by College Council

Date: August 2016

Last Review: April 2021

## CHILD SAFE POLICY

### 1. Rationale

All adults have a Biblical mandate to protect children. Schools are organisations established to manage the care and education of children, and as institutions they must protect children through their systems, structures, policies and practices. A Christian school is an organisation that ought to function as a pro-social collaborative community where parents and staff partner together for the care and education of the children.

The Victorian Government has introduced legislation expressed as seven standards. The standards are as follows...

To create and maintain a child safe organisation, an entity to which the standards apply must have:

- Standard 1: Strategies to embed an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements
- Standard 2: A child safe policy or statement of commitment to child safety
- Standard 3: A code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children
- Standard 4: Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel
- Standard 5: Processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
- Standard 6: Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
- Standard 7: Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children

### 2. Definitions

2.1. Child abuse is now defined as:

- any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence or a grooming offence; and
- the infliction on a child of physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- the serious neglect of a child.

2.2 The Victorian Government's Explanatory Memorandum provides examples of the type of acts that the new definition will capture. These include: serious bullying, stalking or harassment; intimidation; excessive and unreasonable punishment; confinement; voyeurism; encouraging a child to engage in inappropriate or risky behaviour; or failure to meet the child's basic needs for food, shelter, hygiene, medical care or adequate supervision.

2.3 The Victorian Department of Human Services website states that in complying with the child safe standards a school must include the following principles as part of each standard:

- promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal children;
- promoting the cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds; and
- promoting the safety of children with a disability.

### 3. Policy

Melton Christian College will continue to strive to meet the child safe standards by maintaining an organisational culture of child safety in several ways including through educational and managerial leadership.

The College will update and internally publish this policy, which includes a code of conduct regarding appropriate behaviour with children.

College recruitment and induction of staff, as well as acceptance of volunteers will be based on screening, supervision, training and other human-resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel, and leaders and other staff are expected to know the appropriate processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse.

Led by management and College Council, there will be clear strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse, and implemented by staff there will be strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children.

### 4. Governance and Leadership

All adults involved in Governance, or as Employees, or as Volunteers carry a shared responsibility to ensure the safety and protection of children.

#### 4.1. Governance:

4.1.1. **Board of Directors:** MCC has a Board of Directors which is comprised of the Board of Directors of the onsite church; Melton Christian Church. These Directors are also either attending/participating or non-attending/non-participating members of College Council.

4.1.2. **College Council:** MCC has a College Council that automatically includes the Directors (whether they attend/participate in College Council meetings or not), but also includes other members who are Council-members without being Directors. These Council-members may be parents, local pastors, and/or other selected contributors as chosen by the Directors.

4.1.3. **Both Directors and Council-members:** All Directors and Council-members will be considered to have equivalent responsibility to this Policy and to the safety of children throughout the College and its operations. All Directors and Council-members carry the responsibility to ensure that resources are distributed as appropriate to enable effective implementation of this Policy and overall safety and protection of children. All Directors and Council-members are also responsible to maintain the accountability of the Principal and his/her leadership team for effective implementation of this policy.

#### 4.2. Leadership:

4.2.1. **Principal:** The Principal is responsible to ensure the implementation of this Policy among the staff and volunteers. The Principal is expected to delegate responsibility among his/her leadership team, and to oversee subsequent delegation along the line among the general staff and volunteers for implementation.

4.2.2. **Heads of School:** The Head of Primary and Head of Secondary are similarly responsible to ensure the implementation of this Policy by the staff and volunteers who work within their departments.

4.2.3. **Coordinators:** All Coordinators and Team-leaders are similarly responsible to ensure the implementation of this Policy among their staff teams and volunteers. Year-level Coordinators by virtue of the high pastoral-care component of their role have particular opportunity to ensure protection of children.

Faculty Team-leaders by virtue of their closer involvement with curricular-related visitors (eg instrumental teachers, sub-contractors, visiting speakers) have particular opportunity to ensure protection of children in those settings.

4.2.4. **Head of Pastoral Care:** The Head of Pastoral Care, along with any staff who are specifically allocated additional duties of pastoral care have a particular opportunity and responsibility to observe and report instances where children are unsafe and/or not protected. They will often be the first point of contact for other staff or students raising child-safety concerns. They are

therefore responsible for advocating for children and coordinating appropriate responses to incidents.

**4.2.5. General Staff; Teaching and Non-teaching:** All employees are to know this Policy and contribute to its implementation. All employees are to know their professional obligations regarding reporting abuses of children. College employees are expected to be observant and aware of indicators of abuse, and to raise those concerns and see them followed through.

## **5. MCC Child Safety Code of Conduct**

This MCC Child Safety Code of Conduct is developed to be synchronised with, and complementary to the VIT Code of Conduct for members of the Victorian teaching profession. The VIT Code of Conduct is not subject to this MCC Child Safety Code of Conduct, and is appended below.

This MCC Child Safety Code of Conduct will not cover every situation. Nevertheless, it is based on the premise that all children have the right to be protected, and that adults working in a school have the responsibility to do all that they can to protect children. Therefore, if a staffer violates this MCC Child Safety Code, College management may be compelled to respond with disciplinary action, even to the extent of suspension from duties, or immediate dismissal in the case of a very serious violation.

Adults working in a school have the responsibility to do all that they can to protect children.

The VIT Code of Conduct for members of the Victorian teaching profession is the overarching guidance on child safety and protection of children. The MCC Child Safety Code of Conduct provides more information and was developed to complement the VIT Code of Conduct. This MCC Child Safety Code of Conduct may not cover in detail every situation.

VIT Code of Conduct and MCC Child Safety Code of Conduct were developed for all children to have the right to be protected

Where a staffer does not act to protect a child, contravenes VIT Code of Conduct, or contravenes this MCC Child Safety Code, College management may commence disciplinary action under the MCC Child Safety Code of Practice or other MCC policies. This may lead to MCC action such as, suspension from duties or immediate dismissal.

Our College sets these expectations of behaviours for all adults interacting with students within our sites or at school-related events...

1. Always speak and act in a way to proactively protect the safety of students
2. Behave appropriately towards students; physically, emotionally
3. Build a culture of belonging, and both proactively and responsively prevent bullying, teasing, disempowerment or humiliation of students
4. Communicate in an affirming way with students: speak constructively and listen actively, and build an environment where they do the same for each other
5. Demonstrate Biblically-faithful behaviour and demonstrate the College's Core Values: Christ-centredness, Excellence, Community, Respect, Passion for Teaching and Learning.
6. Enable inclusion and participation of disabled students, and of students from diverse language or cultural backgrounds
7. Hold study-discussions or assistance-discussions with more than one student at a time, and create safe transparency by using venues with clear line-of-sight
8. Never use physical punishment, or even inappropriate tackling or rough playing
9. Only discuss topical or unsettling matters with students in a way appropriate to their age, and only within the context of curricular teaching and learning
10. Protect students from discrimination and prejudices, including your own
11. Refrain from any form of sexual conduct with a student, including making sexually suggestive comments, or disclosing sexually suggestive material
12. Refrain from either: closely befriending or favouring, or the opposite, exclusion or alienation of students

13. Refrain from inappropriate physical contact with students, and be aware of the differences (eg, a non-invasive, quick, affirming pat on a shoulder in some contexts may be acceptable, whereas a lingering touch, or stroking, or touching hair is unacceptable)
14. Refrain from personal/non-professional communications with students, and communicate electronically only through official school email or school Learning Management Systems
15. Refrain from photographing students apart from events and images that are specifically for official use in College publications or celebrations, and delete images of students from personal devices
16. Report violations of this policy; internally to management, and externally as professionally appropriate, and take immediate action according to professional practice to ensure any child's immediate safety. Reports made under the MCC Whistleblower Policy, may be treated as a report under the MCC Code of Conduct or actioned under the MCC Whistleblower Procedure
17. Supervise students in a way that takes into account their age-related vulnerabilities
18. Treat all students with equivalent favour
19. Treat confidentiality with professionalism, honour students and their privacy as professionally appropriate
20. Use spaces wisely, for example use staff toilets only, refrain from using student toilets
21. Vigilantly observe and respond to situations concerning child protection matters

## **6. Recruitment of Staff and Inclusion of Volunteers**

### **6.1 Recruitment**

- 6.1.1 Applicants for teaching jobs are automatically expected to have VIT registration which includes police check
- 6.1.2 Employment applicants are given our Child Safe Policy as part of their application-materials
- 6.1.3 As routine part of interviewing, employment applicants are asked if they agree to comply with the MCC Child Safe Policy and Code of Conduct
- 6.1.4 MCC Child Safe Policy forms part of the induction of new employees
- 6.1.5 The responsibility is on each employee to know key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns

### **6.2 Non-teachers and Volunteers**

- 6.2.1 Non-teaching employees are required to maintain WWCC and record of these is kept on file
- 6.2.2 MCC Child Safe Policy forms part of the induction of new employees
- 6.2.3 Volunteers are required to be familiar with the contents of MCC Child Safe Policy and our Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the obligatory reporting of child abuse
- 6.2.4 The responsibility is on each employee's to know key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns

### **6.3 Pre-service Teachers, and Work Experience Students**

- 6.3.1 The College hosts pre-service teachers from various tertiary institutions; as part of their induction to the College they are introduced to this policy and expected to agree to comply with it entirely as professional teachers despite their pre-service status. They are always under the supervision of a VIT registered teacher while supervising students.
- 6.3.2 The College occasionally hosts Work Experience Students from our own or other schools. These visitors are children themselves, so come under the protection of this MCC Child Safe Policy. The expectation on them to act in response to this policy is limited to their status as children.

### **6.4 Adult Students (Yr 12s who are 18 years old)**

- 6.4.1 Among the senior student population there will be a proportion who turn 18 years old during their enrolment and thus will be treated as adult under the law. The College recognises its responsibility to these students to inform them of this Policy as a routine part of their entry to year 11 and year 12. This informing of this Policy will be part of their induction into these year levels.

### **6.5 Service Providers**

The term, Service Providers includes workers contracted or sub-contracted by the College (canteen, cleaners, etc) as well as regular onsite workers such as Instrumental Teachers and Aides which are engaged privately by parents and using the venue of the College during the school-day.

- 6.5.1 Service Providers at the College are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children and are to familiarise themselves with this MCC Child Safe Policy. The school will make this document available to Service Providers.

## **7. Responding to Indications of Child Abuse**

Children are the most vulnerable members of our community, and individuals or groups among the children may be notably more vulnerable. Their vulnerability is partly attributable to the reality that they may not have the knowledge or the power to stop abuse by reporting it. Adults of Melton Christian College share the responsibility for ensuring children are safe from harm, and that includes our responsibility to report abuse.

- 7.1. This Policy acknowledges that rarely but sometimes in urgent cases an adult might need to report child abuse urgently/immediately without further consultation among Pastoral Care of Senior Management staff. Thus it is sometimes appropriate to report to DHS or Police first, then in all cases of reporting, it is important that Pastoral Care and/or Senior Management staff be notified
- 7.2. Adults who have concerns about children being abused should initially speak to the Head of Pastoral Care to see what actions and/or reporting may already be underway in that case, and then confirm that verbal communication with an email that includes (by CC), the Head of School and the Principal for their information
- 7.3. Adults who suspect child abuse but who are unsure about the appropriate way to report that suspicion should contact Child FIRST (part of DHS) in the Melton area; see the appendix below, or if they see the need to respond to more urgent or serious cases they should contact Child PROTECTION (part of DHS) see the appendix below.
- 7.4. Adults who have immediate concerns about child's immediate safety may need to call Police on 000
- 7.5. Adults who are unsure of how to decide if to report should see the information in the appendix below, or check the DHS website.

### **Appendix 1 – Reporting**

*From the DHS website:*

#### **A guide for professionals**

If you have concerns about a child or young person and need guidance in deciding whether to make a report to child protection or to refer the child to a Child FIRST service, you may find the following information helpful.

#### **Information for professionals working with vulnerable children**

Professionals involved with vulnerable children, young people aged 0 to 17 years and their families, including families with an unborn child, may from time to time consider they should report or refer a concern to either child protection or the Child FIRST intake service.

Child FIRST teams provide a consolidated intake service to family services within sub regional catchments. These arrangements reflect the provisions in the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*.

A key objective of the legislation is to create an integrated service system that provides improved supports to vulnerable children, young people and their families. The legislation also introduces a range of new reporting and referral arrangements that will replace what is currently known as a child protection notification.

#### **What circumstances and factors should determine whether to refer to Child FIRST?**

There may be many factors, or combinations of factors, within family life that adversely impact upon children's safety, stability and development. You may already have considered these factors and the following lists are intended to provide some further basic guidance on how to decide whether to refer a matter to Child FIRST or make a report to child protection.

#### **A referral to Child FIRST (Child FIRST Melton: 1300 138 180)**

A referral to Child FIRST may be the best way of connecting children, young people and their families to the services they need, where families exhibit any of the following factors that may impact upon a child's safety, stability or development:

- significant parenting problems that may be affecting the child's development

- family conflict, including family breakdown
- families under pressure due to a family member's physical or mental illness, substance abuse, disability or bereavement
- young, isolated and/or unsupported families
- significant social or economic disadvantage that may adversely impact on a child's care or development

Many cases will not neatly fit into these categories, and it may be harder to determine whether the level and the nature of any risk is such that the child is in need of protection. The following questions may help resolve the best course of action in such cases:

#### **Factors for consideration**

- What specifically has happened to the child that has caused your concerns and what is the impact on their safety, stability, health, wellbeing and development?
- How vulnerable is the child?
- Is there a history or pattern of significant concerns with this child or other children in the family?
- Are the parents aware of the concerns, capable and willing to take action to ensure the child's safety and stability, and promote their health, wellbeing, and development?
- Are the parents able and willing to use support services to promote the child's safety, stability, wellbeing and development?

A referral to Child FIRST should be considered if, after consideration of the available information you are, on balance, more inclined to form a view that the concerns currently have a low to moderate impact on the child, where the immediate safety of the child is not compromised.

On receiving a referral from a professional or community member the Child FIRST team will conduct further assessment of the family and may consult an experienced community-based child protection worker who is based in each Child FIRST team. This assessment may lead to the involvement of a local family services organisation. In most circumstances Child FIRST will inform you of the outcome of your referral.

Where a Child FIRST team or a registered Family Services organisation forms a view that a child or young person is in need of protection they must report the matter to child protection.

#### **Still unsure?**

If you are still unsure who to report or refer to you should contact either child protection or Child FIRST for further advice. **Child FIRST Melton: 1300 138 180**

#### **How to make a report to Child Protection**

##### **Who to contact?**

To report concerns that are life threatening ring Victoria Police 000

To report concerns about the immediate safety of a child within their family unit, call the Child Protection Crisis Line 13 12 78 (24 hours, 7 days a week, toll free within Victoria) Note: this is an emergency service for weekends and after hours only and will pass on cases to the relevant regions the following working day

To contact a child protection office close to you call the local office:

##### **Child protection contact numbers**

These numbers are effective from 30 May 2016

- After hours number 13 12 78
- West Division Intake - metropolitan only - number 1300 664 977

West Division Metro area reports are managed by North Division Intake located at DHHS Preston for the following areas and LGAs: Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Melton, Moonee Valley, Wyndham

## **VIT CODE OF CONDUCT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Code of Conduct has been developed for and by the Victorian teaching profession. It identifies a set of principles, which describe the professional conduct, personal conduct and professional competence expected of a teacher by their colleagues<sup>1</sup> and the community.

It is based on the values set out in the accompanying Code of Ethics, namely

- Integrity
- Respect
- Responsibility

and draws on the Victorian Institute of Teaching's Standards of Professional Practice, and Codes of Conduct for teachers developed by schools and other registration authorities.

### **PURPOSE**

The Code of Conduct codifies what is already common practice within the teaching profession. Its purpose is to:

- promote adherence to the values teachers see as underpinning their profession
- provide a set of principles which will guide teachers in their everyday conduct and assist them to solve ethical dilemmas
- affirm the public accountability of the teaching profession
- promote public confidence in the teaching profession.

The Code of Conduct is not a disciplinary tool.

The Code of Conduct will not cover every situation. There may be policies or procedures set down by the sector/school<sup>2</sup> in which the teacher works, or there may be specific issues that are covered by an industrial agreement or award.

### **SECTION 1: PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

Teachers' professional conduct is characterised by the quality of the relationships they have with their students<sup>3</sup>, their students' parents<sup>4</sup> (guardians and caregivers), families and communities and their colleagues.

#### **RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS**

##### **PRINCIPLE 1.1: TEACHERS PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL STUDENTS TO LEARN**

The main focus of teaching is student learning. Teachers demonstrate their commitment to student learning by:

- a) knowing their students well, respecting their individual differences and catering for their individual abilities
- b) maintaining a safe and challenging learning environment

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<sup>1</sup> 'Teacher' means all persons registered under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006

<sup>2</sup> 'School' refers to an education setting, including school, early childhood education and care services or any other location where teaching and learning occurs.

<sup>3</sup> 'Students' refers to learners, including: students taught by a teacher in a school or other education setting children taught by a teacher in an early childhood setting

<sup>4</sup> Parents' also includes guardians and caregivers.

- c) accepting professional responsibility for the provision of quality teaching
- d) having high expectations of every student, recognising and developing each student's abilities, skills and talents
- e) considering all viewpoints fairly
- f) communicating well and appropriately with their students.

### **PRINCIPLE 1.2: TEACHERS TREAT THEIR STUDENTS WITH COURTESY AND DIGNITY**

Teachers:

- a) work to create an environment which promotes mutual respect
- b) model and engage in respectful and impartial language
- c) protect students from intimidation, embarrassment, humiliation or harm
- d) enhance student autonomy and sense of self worth and encourage students to develop and reflect on their own values
- e) respect a student's privacy in sensitive matters, such as health or family problems, and only reveal confidential matters when appropriate. That is:
  - if the student has consented to the information being used in a certain way
  - to prevent or lessen a serious threat to life, health, safety or welfare of a person (including the student)
  - as part of an investigation into unlawful activity
  - if the disclosure is required or mandated by law
  - to prevent a crime or enforce the law
- f) refrain from discussing students' personal problems in situations where the information will not be treated confidentially
- g) use consequences commensurate with the offence when disciplining students.

### **PRINCIPLE 1.3: TEACHERS WORK WITHIN THE LIMITS OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE**

In fulfilling their role, teachers carry out a wide range of responsibilities. They support students by knowing their strengths and the limits of their professional expertise. Teachers:

- a) seek to ensure that they have the physical, mental and emotional capacity to carry out their professional responsibilities
- b) are aware of the role of other professionals and agencies and when students should be referred to them for assistance
- c) are truthful when making statements about their qualifications and competencies.

### **PRINCIPLE 1.4: TEACHERS MAINTAIN OBJECTIVITY IN THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS**

In their professional role, teachers do not behave as a friend or a parent. They:

- a) interact with students without displaying bias or preference
- b) make decisions in students' best interests
- c) do not draw students into their personal agendas
- d) do not seek recognition at the expense of professional objectivity and goals.

## **PRINCIPLE 1.5: TEACHERS ARE ALWAYS IN A PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE STUDENTS IN THEIR SCHOOL, WHETHER AT SCHOOL OR NOT**

Teachers hold a unique position of influence and trust that should not be violated or compromised. They exercise their responsibilities in ways that recognise that there are limits or boundaries to their relationships with students. The following examples outline some of those limits.

A professional relationship will be violated if a teacher:

- a) has a sexual relationship with a student
- b) uses sexual innuendo or inappropriate language and/or material with students
- c) touches a student without a valid reason
- d) holds conversations of a personal nature or has contact with a student via written or electronic means including email, letters, telephone, text messages or chat lines, without a valid context
- e) accepts gifts, which could be reasonably perceived as being used to influence them, from students or their parents.

A professional relationship may be compromised if a teacher:

- a) attends parties or socialises with students
- b) invites a student or students back to their home, particularly if no-one else is present.

## **RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS (GUARDIANS, CAREGIVERS), FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES**

### **PRINCIPLE 1.6: TEACHERS MAINTAIN A PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENTS (GUARDIANS AND CAREGIVERS)**

Teachers should be respectful of and courteous to parents. Teachers:

- a) consider parents' perspectives when making decisions which have an impact on the education or wellbeing of a student
- b) communicate and consult with parents in a timely, understandable and sensitive manner
- c) take appropriate action when responding to parental concerns.

### **PRINCIPLE 1.7: TEACHERS WORK IN COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS' FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES**

Teachers recognise that their students come from a diverse range of cultural contexts and seek to work collaboratively with students' families and communities within those contexts.

## **RELATIONSHIPS WITH COLLEAGUES**

### **PRINCIPLE 1.8: COLLEGIALITY IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE WORK OF TEACHERS**

Teachers demonstrate collegiality by:

- a) treating each other with courtesy and respect
- b) valuing the input of their colleagues
- c) using appropriate forums for constructive debate on professional matters
- d) sharing expertise and knowledge in a variety of collaborative contexts
- e) respecting different approaches to teaching
- f) providing support for each other, particularly those new to the profession
- g) sharing information relating to the wellbeing of students.

## **SECTION 2:**

### **PERSONAL CONDUCT PRINCIPLE 2.1: THE PERSONAL CONDUCT OF A TEACHER WILL HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE PROFESSIONAL STANDING OF THAT TEACHER AND ON THE PROFESSION AS A WHOLE**

Although there is no definitive boundary between the personal and professional conduct of a teacher, it is expected that teachers will:

- a) be positive role models at school and in the community
- b) respect the rule of law and provide a positive example in the performance of civil obligations
- c) not exploit their position for personal or financial gain
- d) ensure that their personal or financial interests do not interfere with the performance of their duties
- e) act with discretion and maintain confidentiality when discussing workplace issues.

## **SECTION 3: PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE**

### **PRINCIPLE 3.1: TEACHERS VALUE THEIR PROFESSIONALISM, AND SET AND MAINTAIN HIGH STANDARDS OF COMPETENCE**

Teachers:

- a) are knowledgeable in their areas of expertise
- b) are committed to pursuing their own professional learning
- c) complete their duties in a responsible, thorough and timely way.

### **PRINCIPLE 3.2: TEACHERS ARE AWARE OF THE LEGAL REQUIREMENTS THAT PERTAIN TO THEIR PROFESSION. IN PARTICULAR, THEY ARE COGNISANT OF THEIR LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN RELATION TO:**

- discrimination, harassment and vilification
- negligence
- mandatory reporting
- privacy
- occupational health and safety
- teacher registration.