

CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT

Preamble

The Vision of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College (**OLSH College**) attests to us being *'heart people who are faith filled, reverence relationships, pursue excellence and touch the hearts of others'*.

This Code of Conduct gives expression to our Vision and to the College's steadfast resolve to provide a safe and pastoral environment for students. We hold the care, safety and wellbeing of our students and all children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of Catholic education, and we draw inspiration from the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the Gospel.

Regnet Christus! May Christ Reign!
In aeternum (forever)

Purpose and Scope

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets out the expected behaviour of all OLSH College staff and associates¹ in fostering a culture of child safety in our environments. All OLSH College staff and associates, and any other adult involved at the College in child-connected work, are required to comply with this Code of Conduct by observing expectations for appropriate behaviour.

This Code of Conduct is intended to complement child protection legislation, related OLSH College policies and procedures, and other professional standards, codes or ethics that apply to College staff and associates. The Code is signed by staff and personnel to ensure there is a shared understanding of and commitment to the College's child-safe culture and practices.

The Code applies across all physical and online environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided by our College for a student's use (for example, a school camp). The Code enables every adult at OLSH College to understand the important role they play in ensuring that the wellbeing and safety of children and young people are at the forefront of their actions and decision-making.

Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability, those unable to live at home, international students, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTIQ+) students.

¹ In this Code, the term 'associates' refers to Board members, volunteers, contractors, other service providers, religious and chaplains involved with the College.

Expectations – Acceptable Behaviours

Staff and associates of OLSH College must:

- Treat students and families in our College community with respect, both within and outside the College environment;
- Listen and respond to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they disclose that they or another child or student has been abused, or that they are worried about their safety or the safety of another child or student;
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal students, students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, students with a disability, international students, students who are unable to live at home and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and questioning (LGBTIQ+) students;
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries around students. This includes avoiding unmonitored communications and ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not alone with a student;
- Report any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to the Principal or one of the College's Child Safety Champions;
- Understand and comply with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) in line with our *Child Protection Reporting Obligations Policy* and the Department of Education and Training (DET) guidelines, [PROTECT: Four Critical Actions](#).
- If child abuse is suspected, ensure as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm.

Unacceptable Conduct

Staff and associates of OLSH College must not:

- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse;
- Develop any 'special' relationships with students that could be seen as favouritism, that develops a relationship of dependency, that exploits an individual's vulnerability to form an intimate relationship, and/or that could amount to 'grooming' behaviour;
- Exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with students which may be interpreted as not justified by the educational, therapeutic, or service delivery context;
- Ignore behaviours by other adults towards students when they appear to be overly familiar or inappropriate;
- Discuss content of an intimate nature or use sexual innuendo with students, except where it occurs relevantly in the context of parental guidance, delivering the education curriculum or in a therapeutic setting;
- Treat a child unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity;
- Communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting or other digital

technologies), except where that communication is reasonable in the circumstances, related to schoolwork or extra-curricular activities, or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter;

- Make a 'friend' request to a student or accept a 'friend' request from a student through a social media platform;
- 'Follow' a student on a social media platform, unless it is objectively appropriate (for example, where the student is also a family member of the staff member);
- Photograph or video a student without their consent and/or that of their parent or carer, except where required for duty of care purposes;
- Work with students while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.

Teachers

Teaching staff 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 issued by the Victorian Institute of Teaching (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.

Reporting Concerns

All breaches and suspected breaches of this Code of Conduct must be reported to the Principal or the College's Child Safety Leader.

The College's *Child Protection Reporting Obligations Policy* includes information from the DET guidelines, [PROTECT: Four Critical Actions](#) on how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse, and procedures for reporting child abuse concerns and incidents to relevant College staff and authorities.

Whenever there are concerns that a child or student is in immediate danger, Victoria Police should be contacted on 000.

Where the Principal is suspected of breaching this Code of Conduct, the concerned person/party is advised to contact the Chair of the College Board.

Breaches of this Code

Where a member of staff is suspected of breaching this Code of Conduct, the Principal may start the process for managing this under the *Victorian Catholic Education Multi-Enterprise Agreement (VCEMEA)*. In certain contexts, a report may be required to Victoria Police, DFFH Child Protection, the VIT and/or the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP). The outcomes of these reports and follow-up investigations may result in disciplinary consequences. In the case of serious breaches, termination of employment may result.

Where a volunteer, contractor, other service provider, religious and/or chaplain involved with the College is suspected of breaching any obligation within this Code, the Principal will take appropriate action in accordance with the College's *Child Protection Reporting Obligations Policy*. In certain contexts, a report may be made to an external authority and may result in the termination of the person's contract or engagement.

Related College Policies

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Child Safety Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy
- Child Protection Reporting Obligations Policy
- Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes Policy
- Complaints Resolution Policy
- Cyber Safety Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Respectful Relationships Policy
- Staff Social Media Policy
- Student Anti Bullying Policy

References

- State of Victoria, *Child Safe Standards - Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises*, Ministerial Order No. 1359
- Department of Education and Training (DET) 2018, *PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian schools*

Code History and Review

At OLSH College, we are committed to continuous improvement of our child safety systems and practices. We intend this Code of Conduct to be a dynamic document that will be regularly reviewed to ensure it is working in practice and updated to accommodate changes in legislation or circumstance.

Approved by	OLSH College Board
Person(s) Responsible	OLSH College Principal
Date(s) Reviewed or Updated	July 2022
Next Review Date	July 2024



Child Safety Code of Conduct Agreement

I acknowledge that I have received, read and understood this Code of Conduct and I agree to adhere to its standards and expectations. I understand that any violation of the Code shall result in my being subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

Name:

Role/position:

Signature:

Date:

NOTE – OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

Copy of this Code of Conduct to be provided to all OLSH College staff and personnel

Original signed copy of this Code and agreement to be retained by the College; copy to be provided to staff members and personnel.