



## CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING CODE OF CONDUCT

### Rationale

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct (the Code) outlines appropriate, expected and requisite standards of behaviour for all PLC staff, contractors and volunteers towards students and children. The Code serves to protect students, reduce and aim to eradicate any opportunities for abuse or harm to occur to students and children, and promote child safety across the broader College, including the Boarding House environment.

In the context of child safety, the Code provides guidance on how to best support students and how to avoid or better manage difficult situations. This Code has been approved by the PLC Council.

The Principal, Head of Junior School, Deputy Principal (Pastoral, Staff and Students), Head of Learning Enhancement Department (JS), Head of ELC and Head of Boarding are responsible to oversee the development, implementation and review of PLC's child safety policies and practices, and this Code.

This Code should be read in conjunction with PLC's Child Protection, Safety and Wellbeing policy.

### Scope

1. This Code applies across all College environments, including but not limited to the Boarding House students and premises and applies to the physical and online environments used by the students.
2. PLC has expectations of behaviours and boundaries for all school staff and persons interacting with PLC students within the school environment and College community.
3. The Code applies to:
  - All staff members, including non-teaching staff and temporary or casual staff
  - College Council
  - Volunteers, including International Student Accommodation Providers
  - Parents and carers
  - Third party contractors
  - External Education Providers
  - Teacher candidates or other tertiary students on placement at the College
  - Visitors.
4. Certain staff members, volunteers and contractors at the College may have additional professional or occupational codes of conduct that regulate their profession or occupation. The requirements and guidance within these codes of conduct must, concurrently with this Code, be complied with and expectations therewith upheld. In the event that a staff member, volunteer or contractor considers that there is a conflict between these codes of conduct and this Code in a particular matter, the relevant staff member, volunteer or contractor must seek advice from their professional or occupational body and/or PLC's Senior Child Safety Officer and must advise the Principal of their proposed rectification course of action.
5. This Code applies across all College environments, including the Boarding House (Koorinya) and when International Students reside with Accommodation Providers, both during and outside school hours, within and outside the physical school environment (excursions, camps and tours) and the online environment.



## Key Definitions

6. The definitions for this Code are as outlined in Ministerial Order 1359 unless otherwise noted, and can be found at Appendix 1 of this Code.

## Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct

7. This Code predetermines and prescribes behaviours that are acceptable and those that are unacceptable. More specifically, the Code provides a high-level statement of professional boundaries, standards of ethical behaviour and acceptable and unacceptable relationships. It also provides guidance on how to best support students and how to avoid or better manage difficult situations.
8. Staff, volunteers and contractors who breach this Code may be the subject of further investigation and/or disciplinary actions that may result in a range of measures including (depending on the severity of the breach):
  - corrective education
  - counselling
  - increased supervision
  - the restriction of duties
  - appointment to an alternate role
  - suspension
  - in the case of serious breaches, termination of employment, contract or engagement.
9. Where any other member of the College Community breaches any obligation, duty or responsibility within this Code, Presbyterian Ladies' College will take appropriate and proportional action.
10. This Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct is available to all members of the College Community via the PLC public website. The Code is reviewed annually and approved by the College Council.

## Acceptable and Unacceptable Behaviours

### Acceptable Behaviour

11. The following expectations are required to be exhibited at all times by all members of the PLC Community which will enable the effective and consistent promotion of safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of students. These expectations apply across all facets of the school operating and physical environments and the PLC community, including but not limited to international students, Boarding House students and all Accommodation Provider environments.
12. All members of the PLC Community must:
  - Be a positive role model to students and uphold the values of the school in their actions and decisions
  - Promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of students across all school environments, including but not limited to, the Boarding House
  - Be vigilant, informed and proactive with regard to student safety and child protection issues
  - Provide age and stage appropriate care and supervision for students, not only on College campus, but whenever students are involved in PLC approved activities
  - Comply with policies, guidelines and all materials published by the College with respect to child protection and safety
  - Behave respectfully, courteously and ethically towards students and their families and towards other staff
  - Respect students' privacy, particularly in sensitive areas such as toilet areas, Health Centre, change rooms, Aquatic Centre, Performing Arts Centre, camping situations and Boarding environments
  - Promote the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability
  - Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of linguistically and culturally diverse students and their families, including but not limited to, international students and their families



- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families
- Use positive and affirming language towards students
- Encourage students to contribute and 'have a say', and then listen to their response (verbal and non-verbal communication) and respond to their views with due consideration and respect
- Wherever possible, involve students and their families in making decisions about matters that concern them directly and specifically
- Respect individuals' differences
- Help provide an open, safe and supportive environment for all students to interact, and appropriately socialise
- Intervene when students are engaging in bullying behaviour towards others or behaving in a humiliating, vilifying and/or a discriminatory manner
- Promptly and earnestly report any breaches of this Code or concerns about child or student safety to one of the College's Child Safety Officers
- Ensure that obligations (including legal, moral and professional) to report child safety or abuse allegations internally and externally are executed lawfully and are met and recorded as required
- Where an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure that the student involved is made safe as quickly as possible
- Respect the privacy of students and their families and only disclose information to people who have a need to know with the primary consideration being safety of the child/student
- Call Victoria Police on 000 if you have serious concerns for a student's immediate safety or imminent abuse.

### **Unacceptable Behaviour**

13. The following expectations apply across all facets of the PLC Community, including but not limited to, international students in the Boarding House and within all Accommodation Provider environments.
14. Breaches of these established unacceptable behaviours are treated seriously, and will be dealt with in accordance with the applicable College policy.
15. Where allegations involving criminal conduct are reported, the matter will be referred to Victoria Police as a priority.
16. All members of the PLC Community must not:
  - Engage in or condone any form of inappropriate behaviour towards students that is illegal, unsafe or abusive to children or expose students to such behaviours
  - Use prejudice, oppressive behaviour or inappropriate language with, to or in the presence of students
  - Exaggerate or trivialise allegations or issues relating to child abuse or the safety and wellbeing of students
  - Express personal views on cultures, ethnicity, sexuality or disability in the presence of students or discriminate against any student based on culture, ethnicity, sexuality or disability
  - Engage in open discussions of an adult nature and topics when in the presence of students
  - Engage in any form of sexual conduct with a student including partaking in sexually charged discussions or making sexually suggestive comments and sharing sexually suggestive material
  - Engage in inappropriate or unnecessary physical conduct or behaviours including doing things of a personal or private nature that a student can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
  - Engage in any form of physical violence towards a student including inappropriately rough physical play or contact
  - Use physical means or corporal punishment to discipline or control a student
  - Engage in any form of behaviour that has the likelihood or potential to cause a student serious emotional or psychological harm
  - Be alone with a child unnecessarily



- Seek to use children in any way to meet their needs
- Develop 'special' relationships with students that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific students)
- Engage in undisclosed private meetings with a student/s regardless of whether the student/s is your own or not, inside or outside the school and boarding environment
- Engage in inappropriate personal communications with a student through any medium, including but not limited to, any online contact, online applications or interactions with a student
- Use any computer, mobile phone, or video and digital camera to exploit or harass children and young people or expose them to offensive or sexualised content
- Give out personal telephone numbers or social media contact details unless a student needs a phone number in specific circumstances (e.g., providing a mobile phone number when on extended trips and exchanges)
- Accept or request students as 'friends', 'follow' students on social media or otherwise use social media to communicate or interact with a student in any way that is not condoned or approved by the College
- Students who graduate from the College and return as an employee must not remain connected with current PLC students who they teach/coach who will graduate more than two years behind the employee on social media platforms
- Take or publish (including online) photos, movies or recordings of a student without parent / guardian consent unless it has been authorised for educational purposes at PLC or show/provide children with access to inappropriate images or material
- Post online any information about a student that may identify them, such as their full name; age; specific physical attributes; email address; telephone number; residence; school; or details of a club or group they may attend
- Work, communicate or interact with children while under the influence of alcohol or prohibited and/or unprescribed drugs
- Form a sexualised relationship with a student within 2 years of the student graduating from the College
- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.

17. In addition to meeting core functions, duties and responsibilities as outlined, all staff are required to:

- a) Report any suspicions, concerns, allegations or disclosures of alleged child abuse to a PLC Child Safety Officer who will provide information, guidance and support to the staff member, as required. Staff need to be aware that consulting with a Child Safety Officer does not change or remove any obligation they have pursuant to applicable legislation to report the allegation or abuse to an external authority
- b) Maintain valid VIT or WWCC documentation, and
- c) Report to the Principal any criminal charges or convictions received during the course of employment or volunteering that may indicate a possible risk to children and young people, including any such charges or convictions prior to employment.

18. PLC's Child Protection Program includes staff policies that provide detailed guidance for all staff and volunteers on how to maintain appropriate professional boundaries between students and adults at PLC.

### **Agreement to the Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct**

19. This Code is provided to all members of the College Council, staff, direct contact volunteers (those who access the PLC school environment) and direct contact contractors (those who access the PLC school environment) at induction, or otherwise prior to commencing work at the College.
20. This Code is also communicated and reaffirmed via refresher training at regular intervals. All staff, direct contact volunteers and direct contact contractors must acknowledge that they have read and will adhere to this Code.



## Reporting of Concerns

21. The PLC Child Protection Program includes information for Council members, staff, direct contact volunteers and direct contact contractors on how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and how to report child abuse concerns to one of the Colleges nominated Child Safety Officers. Furthermore, the program also contains detailed procedures with respect to the mandatory reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities.
22. External education providers, indirect contact volunteers, students, parents or other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse must contact one of the PLC College Child Safety Officers or the College Principal.
23. Communications involved with the reporting of concerns or allegations of child abuse will be treated confidentially and on a strict 'need to know' basis.
24. The Principal will be informed of any allegations of child abuse or misconduct towards children against a member of staff, contractor or volunteer.
25. The Children Legislation Amendment (Reportable Conduct) Act 2017 (Vic) also requires Principals to have systems in place to prevent child abuse and to investigate and respond to such allegations. Upon receiving the allegation, the Principal will:
  - d) Take immediate action to protect children from a further potential for abuse and act to prioritise the best interests and safety of the child
  - e) Report the allegation to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP). In circumstances where an allegation of criminal conduct is made, Victoria Police will be informed as the first priority.
  - f) Ensure investigation of the allegation promptly occurs, that appropriate action is taken in response, and records of the outcome are kept
  - g) Report the finding and reasons for the outcome to the CCYP at the conclusion of the investigation
  - h) Ensure there is follow up regarding the ongoing safety of the child, including strategies by the College to support the child
  - i) Not disclose details or share information of the allegation internally except when assistance from a Child Safety Officer or member of the College Executive is required by the Principal in the administration of the reportable conduct reporting procedures and obligations.

## Related policies and legislation

Child Safety Staff Code of Conduct  
 Complaints and Grievances Policy  
 Privacy Policy  
 Critical Incident Policy  
 Supervision Policy  
 Recruitment and Selection Policy  
 Induction Policy  
 Staff and Students Professional Boundaries Policy  
 Mandatory Reporting Policy  
 Reportable Conduct Policy  
 Student Wellbeing Policy  
 Site Access Policy  
 Risk Management Policy  
 Working with Children Clearance Policy  
 Gender and Sexual Identity Policy



Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)  
Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005, amended July 2021  
Children, Youth and Families Act 2005  
Ministerial Order 1359 Child Safe Standards Education and  
Training Reform Act 2006  
Children Legislation Amendment (Reportable Conduct) Act  
2017 Children, Youth and Families Act 2005  
Crimes Act 1958

For Office Use Only

Approved By:	PLC Council
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## APPENDIX 1:

### KEY DEFINITIONS OF THIS CODE

Term	Definition
Child	A child or young person who is under the age of 18 years.
Child safety	Includes matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to suspicions, incidents, disclosures or allegations of child abuse.
Child abuse	Means <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence; or an offence under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958; and</li> <li>b) the infliction, on a child, of physical violence; or serious emotional or psychological harm; and</li> <li>c) the serious neglect of a child.</li> </ul>
School Boarding environment	Means any physical, online or virtual space made available or authorised by the school boarding premises governing authority for a child or student boarding at a school boarding premises to use at any time, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) online or virtual school boarding environments (including email, intranet systems, software applications, collaboration tools, and online services);</li> <li>b) other locations provided by the provider of school boarding services or through a third-party provider for a child or student to use including, but not limited to, locations used for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. camps;</li> <li>ii. delivery of education and training such as registered training organisations, TAFEs, non-school senior secondary providers or another school; or</li> <li>iii. sporting events, excursions, competitions or other events</li> <li>iv. environments where tutors are working with boarding house students.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
School Boarding premises governing authority	Means <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) the provider of school boarding services</li> <li>b) the governing body of a school boarding premises (however described), as authorised by the proprietor of school boarding services or the ETR Act</li> <li>c) the principal, as authorised by the proprietor of a school, the school governing body, or the ETR Act.</li> </ul>





School (College) environment	Means any physical, online or virtual places, using during or outside school hours: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) a campus of the school</li> <li>b) online or virtual school environments made available or authorised by the school governing authority for the use of a child or students (including email, intranet systems, software applications, collaboration tools, and online services)</li> <li>c) other locations provided by the school or through a third-party provider for a child or student to use including, but not limited to, location used for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. camps</li> <li>ii. delivery of education and training such as registered training organisations, TAFEs, non-school senior secondary providers or another school</li> <li>iii. sporting events, excursions, competitions and other events.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
School governing authority	Means <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) the proprietor of a school, including a person authorised to act for or on behalf of the proprietor</li> <li>b) the governing body for a school (however described), as authorised by the proprietor of a school or the ETR Act</li> <li>c) the principal, as authorised by the proprietor of a school, the school governing body, or the ETR Act.</li> </ul>
School (Boarding) staff	In a non-government school/ boarding premises means an individual working in a school/ boarding environment who is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) directly engaged or employed by a school/ boarding premises governing authority</li> <li>b) a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary) engaged by the school/ boarding premises governing authority to perform child-related work. This includes tutors working with Boarding House students.</li> <li>c) a minister of religion, a religious leader or an employee or officer of a religious body associated with the school/ boarding premises</li> </ul>
School (College) staff	Means an individual working in a school environment who is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority;</li> <li>b) a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary) engaged by the school governing authority to perform child-related work; or</li> <li>c) a minister of religion, a religious leader or an employee or officer of a religious body associated with the school.</li> </ul>
Student	A person who is enrolled at or attends the school or student at the school boarding premises.
Volunteer	Means a person who performs work without remuneration or reward for the school or school boarding premises in the school environment or school boarding premises environment.  For the purpose of this policy this term also includes International Student Accommodation Providers as the College does not utilise commercial or paid International Student Accommodation Providers.