



## *Presbyterian Ladies' College*

MELBOURNE

### **CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING CODE OF CONDUCT**

#### **1. Rationale**

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct outlines appropriate standards of behaviour for all PLC staff, contractors and volunteers towards students. The Code serves to protect students, reduce any opportunities for abuse or harm to occur, and promote child safety in the College environment. It provides guidance on how to best support students and how to avoid or better manage difficult situations. The PLC Council has endorsed this Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct.

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 oversee the development, implementation and review of child safety policies and practices.

#### **2. Scope**

PLC has expectations of behaviours and boundaries for all school staff and persons interacting with students within our College community.

The Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct applies to:

- all staff members, including non-teaching staff and temporary or casual staff
- the College Council
- volunteers
- parents and carers
- third party contractors
- external Education Providers
- teacher candidates or other tertiary students on placement at the College
- visitors.

Certain staff members, volunteers and contractors at the College may have professional or occupational codes of conduct that regulate their profession or occupation. These codes of conduct must also be complied with. In the event that the staff member, volunteer or contractor considers that there is a conflict between these codes of conduct and the Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct in a particular matter, the relevant staff member, volunteer or contractor must seek advice from their profession or occupational body and/or the Senior Child Safety Officer and must advise the Principal of their proposed course of action.

The Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct applies across all College environments, including the Boarding House (Koorinya), both during and outside school hours, within and outside the physical school environment (excursions, camps and tours) and the online environment.

**3. Key definitions (as outlined in Ministerial Order 1359 unless otherwise noted)**

Term	Definition
Child	A child or young person who is under the age of 18 years
Student	A person who is enrolled at or attends the school or student at the school boarding premises
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
School/ Boarding staff	<p>In a non-government school/ boarding premises means an individual working in a school/ boarding environment who is:</p> <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> </ul> <p>a minister of religion, a religious leader or an employee or officer of a religious body associated with the school/ boarding premises</p>
School environment	<p>Means any physical, online or virtual places, using during or outside school hours:</p> <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 Boarding environment	<p>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:</p> <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>

Term	Definition
School governing authority	<p>Means</p> <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 premises governing authority	<p>Means</p> <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>
Volunteers	<p>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</p>

#### 4. Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct

The Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct lists behaviours that are acceptable and those that are unacceptable. It provides a high-level statement of professional boundaries, 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.

Staff, volunteers and contractors who breach this Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct may be subject to 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.

Where any other member of the College Community breaches any obligation, duty or responsibility within the Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct, Presbyterian Ladies' College will take appropriate action.

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct is available to all members of the College Community via our public website. The Code is reviewed annually and endorsed by the College Council.

## 5. Acceptable Behaviour

The following expectations are required by all members of the PLC Community for promoting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of students.

All members of the PLC Community must:

- Be a positive role model to students
- Promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of students in all school environments
- Be vigilant and proactive with regard to student safety and child protection issues
- Provide age appropriate supervision for students
- Comply with guidelines published by the College with respect to child protection and safety
- Behave respectfully, courteously and ethically towards children and their families and towards other staff
- Respect students' privacy in sensitive areas such as toilet areas, Health Centre, change rooms, Aquatic Centre, Performing Arts Centre, camping situations and boarding
- 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
- 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 'have a say' and then listen and respond to their views with respect
- Involve children and their families in making decisions about matters that concern them wherever possible
- Respect individuals' differences
- Help provide an open, safe and supportive environment for all students to interact, and socialise
- Provide adequate care and supervision of all students, not only on the campus but whenever students are involved in PLC approved activities
- Intervene when students are engaging in bullying behaviour towards others or acting in a humiliating, vilifying and/ or a discriminatory manner
- Report any breaches of this Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct or concerns about child safety to one of the College's Child Safety Officers
- Ensure that obligations (including legal) to report allegations internally and externally are met
- Where an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the student involved is safe
- Respect the privacy of students and their families and only disclose information to people who have a need to know
- Call the Police on 000 if you have concerns for a student's immediate safety.

## 6. Unacceptable Behaviour

All members of the PLC Community must not:

- Engage in any form of inappropriate behaviour towards students or expose students to such behaviour
- Use prejudice, oppressive behaviour or inappropriate language with 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 when in the presence of students
- Engage in any form of sexual conduct with a student including making sexually suggestive comments and sharing sexually suggestive material
- Engage in inappropriate or unnecessary physical conduct or behaviours including doing things of a personal 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
- Use physical means or corporal punishment to discipline or control a student
- Engage in any form of behaviour that has the potential to cause a student serious emotional or psychological harm
- Be alone with a child unnecessarily
- 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 that is not your own inside or outside the school environment
- Engage in inappropriate personal communications with a student through any medium, including any online contact or interactions with a student
- 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 in any way that is not condoned or approved by the College
- 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
- Post online any information about a student that may identify them, such as their full name; age; email address; telephone number; residence; school; or details of a club or group they may attend
- Work with children while under the influence of alcohol or prohibited drugs
- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.

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

- Report any suspicions, concerns, allegations or disclosures of alleged abuse to a Child Safety Officer who will provide and support to the staff member. Staff need to be aware that consulting with a Child Safety Officer does not change any obligation they have under legislation to report to an external authority
- Maintain valid VIT or WWCC documentation
- 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.

Our Child Protection Program includes Staff Policies that provide detailed guidance for all staff and volunteers on how to maintain professional boundaries between students and adults at PLC.

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

The PLC Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct is provided to all members of the College Council, Staff, Direct Contact Volunteers and Direct Contact Contractors at induction, or otherwise prior to them commencing work at the College.

It is also communicated 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 Child Safety and Wellbeing Code of Conduct.

## **8. Reporting of Concerns**

The PLC Child Protection Program includes information for Council members, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers and Direct Contact Contractors as to how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and how to report child abuse concerns to one of the School's nominated Child Safety Officers. It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities. External education providers, indirect contact volunteers, students, parents or other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse are asked to contact one of the College Child Safety Officers. Communications will be treated confidentially on a 'need to know basis'.

*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.

The Principal will be informed of any allegation of child abuse or misconduct towards children against a member of staff, contractor or volunteer.

Upon receiving the allegation, the Principal will:

- a) Take immediate action to protect children from further potential for abuse
- b) Report the allegation to the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP). In circumstances where an allegation of criminal conduct is made, the Victorian Police will be informed as the first priority.
- c) Ensure investigation of the allegation occurs, that appropriate action is taken in response, and records of the outcome are kept
- d) Report the finding and reasons for the outcome to the CCYP at the conclusion of the investigation.
- e) Not disclose details or share information of the allegation internally except when assistance from a Child Safety Officer is required by the Principal in the administration of the reportable conduct reporting procedures and obligations

## **Related policies and legislation**

Child Protection, Safety and Wellbeing Policy  
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  
Student Wellbeing 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

*Approved:* PLC Council

*Date:* June 2022

*Review date:* June 2023

*Update history:* 9/21: Policy reviewed by PLC Executive's; addition of Legislative context for Reportable Conduct Scheme

2/22 Review and updated in response to New Child Safety Standards and Ministerial Order 1359 commencing 1 July 2022