

FORM 3: Child Safety Code of Conduct



CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT

This Child Safety Code of Conduct has been approved by the CES Ltd Board for application in each Sandhurst Catholic School and must be customised for use in each particular School in accordance with the instructions outlined. It should be made available to all CES Ltd school staff, School Advisory Council members, volunteers, contractors and clergy, who must sign and agree to abide by this approved Code. This note is to be removed in the published version of the Code.

CES Ltd is committed to the safety of all children and has 'zero tolerance' for child abuse.

CES Ltd recognises the importance of embedding a child safe culture across the organisation and is committed to ensuring each Sandhurst Catholic School operates in compliance with the requirements of Ministerial Order 870 – Child Safe Standards (Ministerial Order 870).

The Catholic Education Office (CEO) is the leadership and management arm of CES Ltd and is delegated responsibility for leading and guiding Sandhurst Catholic Schools. It also provides guidance, support, and advice to the four non-diocesan secondary colleges, but does not have authority to manage these schools.

1. Vision

The vision for Catholic Education Sandhurst Limited (CES Ltd) is to provide, in partnership with our families, stimulating, enriching, liberating and nurturing learning environments in each of the Catholic school communities within the Diocese. At the heart of this vision is our commitment to the ongoing duty of care that we have for the safety, wellbeing, and inclusion of all children and young people.

We believe:

- that the values of the Gospel are central to who we are, what we do, and how we act
- in leadership encompassing vision, innovation and empowerment.

2. Purpose

A Child Safety Code of Conduct has a specific focus on promoting child safety at CES Ltd and safeguarding children and young people against all forms of abuse as defined under Ministerial Order 870. Child abuse is defined in section 3 of the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic) as including:

- any act committed against a child involving a sexual offence or a grooming offence under section 49M(1) of the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic)
- the infliction of physical violence or serious emotional or psychological harm
- the serious neglect of a child.

A child is defined by the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic) as a person who is under the age of 18 years.

The purpose of the Child Safety Code of Conduct is to identify appropriate and inappropriate behaviour with children in a school environment. The objective is to guide all CES Ltd staff in identifying and regulating their own behaviour and the behaviour of other staff, and to protect children from abuse in the school environment.

The Code should be read in conjunction with the CES Ltd Commitment Statement to Child Safety and other child safety policies and procedures.

The Code is intended to complement Ministerial Order 870, child protection legislation, mandatory reporting and other reporting requirements and the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) Codes of Conduct as these apply to staff and personnel.

3. Scope

This Code applies to all CES Ltd staff who are:

- directly engaged or employed by CES Ltd (includes Board, Committees, and School Advisory Council members)
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider
- a minister of religion (clergy), and religious personnel (Brother, Sister, Monk)

It applies to all aspects of a staff member's engagement with Sandhurst Catholic school students at any Sandhurst Catholic School, including students aged 18 and over.

This Code applies regardless of:

- the location of where an interaction occurs, whether during or outside school grounds or during or outside school hours
- whether the interaction occurs in person or online
- a student's age
- a student's consent
- the consent of parents/guardians and families
- circumstances in which a student initiates an interaction or relationship between the Worker and the student.

4. Acceptable and Unacceptable Behaviours

Acceptable behaviours

All staff are responsible for supporting the safety of children by:

- adhering to and upholding the CES Ltd Commitment Statement to Child Safety and other child safety policies and procedures at all times
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- treating everyone in the CES Ltd community with respect (modelling positive and respectful relationships and acting in a manner that sustains a safe, educational and pastoral environment)
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child's self-identification)
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination)
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, during personal care activities)
- ensuring as far as practicable that staff are not alone with a student
- reporting any allegations of child abuse to the CES Ltd Executive Leadership Team, a principal, or a Child Safety Officer in accordance with Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy, and Procedures
- understanding and complying with all reporting obligations as they relate to mandatory reporting and also reporting under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic)
- reporting any child safety concerns to the school's leadership or a Child Safety Officer
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe
- being vigilant and taking all reasonable steps to protect the students in CES's care from abuse or harm
- abiding by professional boundaries, acknowledging that interactions with students by their very nature are open to scrutiny
- respecting the language, customs, religions and cultures of a student

- reporting any suspected breach of this Code by any other staff to the principal or another member of the school leadership team
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that the students are safe, in accordance with the CES Ltd policies and procedures
- respecting the confidentiality and privacy of students and acting in accordance with the CES Limited Privacy Policy
- only interacting with students online using CES Ltd technology systems and only in connection with their role at CES Ltd
- immediately notifying CES Ltd if they become the subject of any child safety investigation or become charged with any offence related to child safety
- complying with their professional and employment obligations, including any other relevant professional or occupational code of conduct such as the VIT Code of Conduct
- developing and exercising prudent judgment and sensitivity regarding appropriate physical interactions and only engaging in physical interactions with students where it may be necessary, a required part of the educative process or beneficial and/or supportive
- complying with any lawful and reasonable direction by CES Ltd
- cooperating with any child safety investigation by CES Ltd or any regulatory authority.

Unacceptable behaviours

All staff must not:

- engage in any form of child abuse, including behaviour that could constitute grooming
- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse
- develop any 'special' relationships with students that could be seen as favouritism, including but not limited to:
 - the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific student;
 - attending parties or socialising with students outside organised CES Ltd events without the knowledge of the principal
 - sharing personal details about their private life with students
 - meeting with students outside of school hours without permission from CES Ltd
- exhibit behaviours with students which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example, sitting on laps, massages)
- put students at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors)
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with a student or do things of a personal nature that a student can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes

- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of students (for example, personal social activities)
- use inappropriate language in the presence of students
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of students
- have contact with a student or their family outside of school without CES Ltd knowledge and/or consent (for example, unauthorised after hours tutoring, private instrumental/other lessons or sport coaching). Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is appropriate
- have any online contact with a student (including by social media, email, instant messaging etc.) or their family (unless necessary for work purposes e.g. by providing families with e-news letters or assisting students with their school work); become 'friends' with, follow or add a student on any social media platform
- exchange personal contact details with a student such as phone number, social networking sites or email addresses
- photograph or video a student without the consent of the parent or guardians;
- engage in conduct towards or in the presence of a student that suggests contempt, ridicule or intolerance, including because of the student's or another person's race, culture, religion, gender, sexuality or disability
- share or request any photographs, videos, recordings or personal information about students without CES Ltd consent, including on any of their own social media platforms
- work with a student while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs or consume alcohol or drugs at school or at school events in the presence of children.

Teachers

Teachers are also required to abide by the principles relating to relationships with students as set out in the Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct published by the Victorian Institute of Teaching. These principles include:

- knowing their students well, respecting their individual differences and catering for their individual abilities
- work to create an environment which promotes mutual respect
- model and engage in respectful and impartial language
- protect students from intimidation, embarrassment, humiliation and harm
- respect a student's privacy in sensitive matters
- interact with students without displaying bias or preference
- do not violate or compromise the unique position that a teacher holds of influence and trust in their relationship students.

School counsellors

In their dealings with students, school counsellors and psychologists should also take into account their professional obligations as set out in a code of ethics or practice to which they are bound, including because of their membership of:

- The Australian Psychological Society
- Australian Counselling Association

Sports and recreation

Coaches, staff members and volunteers involved in coaching, training or assisting students during sporting and recreation activities should adopt practices that assist children to feel safe and protected, including:

- using positive reinforcement and avoiding abusive, harassing or discriminatory language
- coaching students to be 'good sports'
- if physical contact with a student by a coach or other adult is necessary during a sport or other recreational activity then explain the reason for the contact and ask for the student's permission
- avoid where possible situations where an adult may be alone with a student such as in a dressing or change room, first aid room, dormitory or when the student needs to be transported in a vehicle.

Policy Compliance

All staff at Our Lady's Primary School receive a copy of this Code when they are appointed to the school. They are expected to read and be familiar with its content. The Code will be included in the Induction program for new staff and all staff will be briefed on the Code during staff meetings during the year.

A copy of the Code will be included in the staff handbook.

Breach of this Code

Staff that breach this Code may be subject to disciplinary action, including and up to termination of their employment or engagement.

Individuals that are aware of a suspected breach of this Code should refer to Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy, and Procedure, and can make a report to the appropriate member of the CES Ltd Executive Leadership Team or Sandhurst Catholic school Principal in the first instance. All reports will be treated confidentiality.

The appropriate member of the CES Ltd Executive Leadership Team is also required to report to the VIT any charges, committals for trial or convictions concerning in relation to a sexual offence by a registered teacher or certain allegations or concerns about a registered teacher.

I, _____, confirm I have been provided with a copy of the above Code of Conduct and will abide by it.

Signed: _____ Date: _____