



# CHILD SAFE CODE OF CONDUCT

## Introduction

St Columba's College is a Mary Aikenhead Ministries College in the tradition of the Sisters of Charity. We are called to develop in each member of our community a contemporary understanding and application of the charism of Venerable Mary Aikenhead and the spirituality of the Sisters of Charity, and the Mary Aikenhead Ministries' mission, vision and values and love, justice, compassion and hope.

The Child Safe Code of Conduct outlines appropriate standards of behaviour for all adults in the College environment towards students. It 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.

***It is the College's policy that any breach of the Child Safe Code of Conduct is a child safety incident that must be reported internally (within the College).***

***Any breach that meets the threshold (the point at which an action will be necessary) for external reporting (to an organisation outside the College, such as the Police or Commission for Children and Young People) must also be reported to the relevant external authority.***

For more information, refer to our procedures for Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns.

The College reviews the Child Safe Code of Conduct annually. The St Columba's College Board Ltd has approved the Child Safe Code of Conduct.

The Child Safe Code of Conduct is published on our public website.

Our Child Safety Program also includes a Staff and Student Professional Boundaries policy that provides detailed guidance for all Staff, Volunteers, Contractors and External Education Providers on how to maintain professional boundaries between students and adults at St Columba's College.

## Scope

The Child Safe Code of Conduct applies to all adults in the College community, including:

- College Board and all sub-committee members, the Principal and the Leadership Team
- Clergy and members of religious congregations
- all staff members, including non-teaching staff and temporary or casual Staff
- all volunteers
- all contractors (including external education providers)
- teaching students on placement at the College
- Parents/carers and other adult family members of students
- Visitors,

together referred to as “the College Community” for the purposes of the Child Safe Code of Conduct.

The Child Safe Code of Conduct applies in all College environments. College environments include the following physical, virtual and online places used during or outside school hours:

- a campus of the College
- online or virtual College environments made available or authorised by the St Columba's College Board Ltd (or the Principal on its behalf) for use by a student (including email, intranet systems (eg SEQTA), software applications, collaboration tools and online services)
- other locations provided by the College or through a third-party provider for a student to use, including but not limited to:
  - camps
  - approved homestay accommodation
  - delivery of education and training such as registered training organisations, TAFEs, non-school senior secondary providers, another school
  - sporting events, excursions, competitions and other events.

Certain staff members, volunteers and contractors at the College may have other 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 their professional or occupational code of conduct and the Child Safe Code of Conduct in a particular matter, the relevant staff member, volunteer or contractor must seek advice from their professional or occupational regulatory body and/or a Child Protection Officer, and must advise the Principal of their proposed course of action.

## The Child Safe Code of Conduct

Each member of the College Community is responsible for promoting the safety and wellbeing of students by adhering to the following standards of behaviour:

### **DO:**

- Uphold and act in accordance with St Columba's College's Child Safe Policy at all times.
- Comply with applicable guidelines published by the College with respect to child safety, such as the Staff and Student Professional Boundaries policy.
- Behave as a positive role model to students.
- Promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of students.
- Be vigilant and proactive with regard to student safety and wellbeing, including child protection issues.
- Provide age-appropriate supervision for students.
- Treat all students with respect.
- Avoid touching or making physical contact with students, as far as is reasonable practicable.
- Ensure where one on one interactions need to occur with a student, that they are conducted with high visibility or with line of sight, where this is possible.
- Promote the safety, participation and empowerment of students with disability.
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of linguistically and/or culturally diverse students, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and LGBTQIA+ students.
- Use positive and affirming language towards students.
- Encourage students to ‘have a say’ and participate, and then listen to them with respect.
- Respect cultural, religious and political differences.
- Help provide an open, safe and supportive environment for all students to interact, and socialise.
- Intervene when students are engaging in bullying behaviour towards others or acting in a humiliating or vilifying way.
- Report any breaches of this Child Safe Code of Conduct.

- Report concerns about child safety to one of the College's Child Protection Officers and ensure that your legal obligations to report child abuse or other harm externally are met.
- Where an allegation of child abuse or other harm is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the student involved is safe.
- Call the Police on 000 if you have immediate concerns for a student's safety.
- Respect the privacy of students and their families and only disclose information to people who have a need to know.

## **DO NOT:**

- Engage in any form of inappropriate behaviour towards students or expose students to such behaviour.
- Engage in prejudicial (influencing people unfairly) or oppressive (using power to treat people unfairly) behaviour or use inappropriate language with students.
- Express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of students or discriminate against any student based on culture, race, ethnicity or disability.
- Engage in open discussions of an adult nature 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 (other than as expressly outlined in our Restraint of Students Policy) or corporal punishment to discipline or control a student.
- Engage in any form of behaviour that has the potential to cause a student harm, including serious emotional or psychological harm.
- 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 who is not your own child.
- Engage in activities with a student who is not your own child, outside of school hours and without permission from the student's parent/carer.
- Tutor (for remuneration or otherwise) any child who is a student at the College.
- Travel alone with a student – should such a situation arise a Leadership Team member must be told of the arrangement and where possible, parents are to be contacted.
- Engage in inappropriate personal communications with a student through any medium, including any online contact or interactions with a student.
- Communicate with students electronically, other than via College approved mediums.
- Provide/exchange personal contact details with students, such as phone numbers, social networking sites or email addresses.
- Take or publish (including online) photos, movies or recordings of a student without parental/carer consent.
- Post identifying information about a student online unless it is necessary for the College's activities or you have consent from the student and/or their parents/guardians. Identifying information includes things such as the student's: full name; age; e-mail address; telephone number; residence; school; or details of a club or group that they may attend.
- Work with students while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Consume alcohol or drugs at the College or at College events in the presence of students.
- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse or other harm.

## Agreement to the Child Safe Code of Conduct

The College provides a copy of the Child Safe Code of Conduct to all Staff, relevant volunteers and relevant contractors at induction, or otherwise prior to them commencing work at the

College. The College also communicates it via refresher training at regular intervals for all Staff, as well as direct contact and regular volunteers.

All Staff, as well as direct contact and regular volunteers must sign an agreement to adhere to the Child Safe Code of Conduct prior to commencing work at College.

The Child Safe Code of Conduct forms part of the contract between the College and any direct contact (people who come in to the College to work directly with students) and regular contractors (people who provide services to the College eg electrician, plumber). Therefore, all direct contact and regular contractors are deemed to have agreed to adhere to the Child Safe Code of Conduct on signing the contract or on commencing work at the College.

A copy of the Child Safe Code of Conduct is provided to Parents/carers, who must sign an agreement to abide by the Child Safe Code of Conduct on enrolment.

## Consequences for Breaching the Child Safe Code of Conduct

Staff, including the Leadership Team and Principal, Volunteers and Contractors who breach this 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):

- remedial (additional learning about the Child Safe program) 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 our Child Safe Code of Conduct, St Columba's College will take appropriate action.

Where appropriate, consequences for breaching this Code of Conduct, or any of the Child Safe policies and procedures, will result in a report to the relevant authorities eg CCYP, VIT, Victoria Police.

## Report any Concerns

### Staff

It is the College's policy that any breach of the Child Safe Code of Conduct is a child safety incident. Therefore, all staff, direct contact and regular volunteers, and direct contact and regular contractors who witness, or suspect, any breach of this Code of Conduct must report their concern internally and, if required, also externally.

Staff who, in good faith, make an internal report alleging a breach of the Child Safe Code of Conduct will be protected from victimisation or other adverse consequences.

Our Child Safety Program includes information for staff, volunteers and contractors about how to identify key indicators of child abuse or other harm and how to report child safety incidents or concerns internally. It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child safety incidents or concerns to relevant authorities. For more information, refer to our procedures for [Procedures for Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns](#).

## Students

The College provides students with information about and encourages them to use multiple pathways to raise child safety incidents or concerns about or at the College, including breaches of the Child Safe Code of Conduct. These include:

- informal and formal ways
- an 'anonymous' way
- through external child advocacy or child safety organisations.

For more information, refer to the [Complaints Policy](#).

## Parents/carers, Family Members or Other Community Members

Parents/carers, family members or other community members who witness or suspect that there has been a breach of this Code of Conduct, or have concerns that a child or young person associated with the College may be subject to abuse or harm from a member of Staff, a Volunteer or a Contractor, should contact:

- the College's Senior Child Safety Officer, Brigitte McDonald, Deputy Principal, by phoning 03 9337 5311 or emailing [mcdonaldb@columba.vic.edu.au](mailto:mcdonaldb@columba.vic.edu.au) OR
- the Principal, on 9337 5311 or [principal@columba.vic.edu.au](mailto:principal@columba.vic.edu.au)

If the concern relates to the Principal, contact should be made with the St Columba's College Board Chair ([stcchair@columba.vic.edu.au](mailto:stcchair@columba.vic.edu.au))

Communications will be treated confidentially on a 'need to know basis'.

***Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger, the Police should be contacted on 000.***

### POLICY HISTORY AND SCHEDULE

Date of Approval:	August 2023
Approval Authority:	St Columba's College Board
Delegated Contact Person:	College Principal
Next Review Date:	August 2025