Melbourne Archdiocese
Catholic Schools

Child Safety Code of Conduct

1. Introduction

This Code of Conduct has the full approval and endorsement of the MACS Board. It should be made available to all MACS Staff, including MACS Board and Board Committee members, MACS Executives, Principals, MACS employees, volunteers, contractors, consultants, School Advisory Council members, clergy and those providing religious ministry in MACS (collectively, **MACS Staff**), who must sign and agree to abide by this approved Code.

Central to the mission of MACS is an explicit commitment to providing a safe and supportive environment where the emotional, social, intellectual, spiritual and physical wellbeing of students is a priority.

All students enrolled in MACS schools have the right to feel safe and be safe. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our priority, and we do not and will not tolerate child abuse. We aim to create a child-safe and child-friendly environment where children are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety.

Staff are expected to actively contribute to a culture that respects the dignity of its members and is affirming of the Gospel values of love, care for others, compassion and justice. They are required to observe child-safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children.

2. Purpose

This Child Safety Code of Conduct has a specific focus on promoting child safety and wellbeing in school environments and safeguarding children and young people in MACS schools against sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse or neglect. It is intended to complement other professional and occupational codes, including the Code of Conduct for MACS Staff.

3. Scope

This Child Safety Code of Conduct applies to all MACS staff being all MACS Board members, MACS Board committee members, School Advisory Council members, the principal and all other staff, volunteers, contractors and clergy and those involved in religious ministry (collectively, Staff).

4. MACS Child Safety Commitment Statement

MACS has zero tolerance for any form of child abuse and is deeply committed to upholding and embedding the highest standards of child safety across our schools.

We are guided by our Catholic faith and the unique and unrepeatable dignity of every person in our care. We are dedicated to creating an inclusive and protective environment where every child can feel and be safe.

We are responsible for inspiring and enabling every child to flourish and enrich the world. Child safety is a shared responsibility between MACS, MACS Staff and the wider community.

5. Acceptable behaviours

In addition to signing Code of Conduct for MACS Staff, all Staff are required to declare and sign this Child Safety Code of Conduct upon appointment or engagement.

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

- adhering to MACS' child safety and wellbeing policies and upholding MACS' statement of commitment to child safety, at all times
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse

- treating everyone in the school community with respect
- taking into account the needs of all children and students
- 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 or Torres Strait Islander child's self-identification)
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero-tolerance for discrimination)
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, during personal care activities)
- paying particular attention to the needs of students with disability, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students who are unable to live at home, international students and lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) students
- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not alone with a child
- reporting any allegations of child abuse to the school's leadership (or child safety officer if the school has appointed someone to this role) or a MACS Manager
- understanding and complying with all reporting obligations as they relate to mandatory reporting and reporting under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic)
- understanding and complying with all obligations as they relate to the reportable conduct scheme including reporting allegations of reportable conduct in accordance with the school's reportable conduct policy
- reporting any child safety concerns to the school's leadership or a MACS Manager (or child safety officer if the school has appointed someone to this role)
- ensuring as quickly as possible that the child is safe if an allegation of child abuse is made
- reporting to the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) any charges, committals for trial or convictions in relation to a sexual offence by a registered teacher, or specific allegations or concerns about a registered teacher
- ensuring they comply with any and all applicable professional or occupational codes of conduct, including the Code of Conduct for MACS Staff.

6. Unacceptable behaviours

All MACS Staff must not:

- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse
- develop any special relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children)
- exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example, inappropriate sitting on laps)
- put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors)
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves (for example, toileting or changing clothes)
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities)
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
- discriminate against any child, including because of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or disability
- work with children while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs

- have contact with a child or their family outside school without the school leadership's or child safety officer's (if the school has appointed someone to this role) knowledge and/or consent or the school governing authority's approval (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 child (including through social media, email, instant messaging) or their family unless necessary (for example, providing families with eNewsletters or assisting students with their schoolwork)
- use any personal communication channels/devices such as a personal email account to contact students
- exchange personal contact details such as phone numbers, social networking sites or email addresses with students
- where a Staff member has existing relationships outside of school with Students and / or families this should be made known to the Principal.
- photograph or video a child without the consent of the parents or carers
- consume illegal drugs at school or at school events in the presence of children
- consume alcohol when responsible for the supervision and care of students.
- consume alcohol at school or at school events in the presence of students. Limited exceptions, such as when a school has a Vocational Education Training (VET) commercial hospitality venue or at a Year 12 graduation event where Parents and carers are present and responsible for their children must be approved by the Principal and School Advisory Council.

6.1. Teachers

Teachers 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 published by the 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.

6.2. Psychologists and school counsellors

In their dealings with students, psychologists and school counsellors 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:

- Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency
- Australian Counselling Association
- Speech Pathology Australia.

6.3. 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'

- explaining the reason for the contact and asking for the student's permission if physical contact with a student by a coach or other adult is necessary during a sporting or other recreational activity
- avoiding (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.

6.4. Clergy or other persons involved in religious ministry

In addition to this Code of Conduct, clergy and other persons involved in religious ministry abide by the commitments in the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne Statement of Commitment, published by the Professional Standards Unit of the Vicar General's Office in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, to safeguard children and young people from abuse.

7. Breaches of this code

Where a member of staff is suspected of breaching this Code of Conduct, MACS may start the process under clause 13 of the *Catholic Education Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2022 (CEMEA): Diocese of Ballarat, Diocese of Sandhurst, Archdiocese of Melbourne and Lavalla Catholic College Traralgon* for managing employment concerns. This may result in disciplinary consequences.

Where a Principal is suspected of breaching this Code of Conduct, the concerned party is advised to contact the relevant MACS General Manager (Regions).

Where any other MACS Staff member, including volunteers and contractors, is suspected of breaching this code, the Manager or Principal is to take appropriate action, including (if applicable) in accordance with the PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse – Reporting Obligations Policy.

In appropriate cases, a breach may be referred to Victoria Police and/or a regulatory body, such as the VIT.

8. Related policies and documents

Related MACS policies and documents

Code of Conduct for MACS Staff
Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to Abuse – Reporting Obligations Policy and procedures
Reportable Conduct Policy

9. Legislation and standards

Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
Ministerial Order 1359: *Implementing the Child Safe Standards- Managing the risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises*
Catholic Education Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2022 (CEMEA): Diocese of Ballarat, Diocese of Sandhurst, Archdiocese of Melbourne and Lavalla Catholic College Traralgon
VIT Code of Conduct

Policy information

Assigned Framework	Child Safety and Wellbeing
Responsible executive	Director, Child Safety and Risk
Policy owner	General Manager, Child Safety
Approving authority	MACS Board
Assigned board committee	Child Safety and Risk Management
Approval date	26 June 2025
Risk rating	Extreme

Review by	June 2027
Superseded documents	Child Safety Code of Conduct – v1.0 – 2021 Child Safety Code of Conduct – v2.0 – 2022 Child Safety Code of Conduct – Template for Schools – v3.0 – 2022 Child Safety Code of Conduct – Template for Schools – v4.0 – 2023
Publication	MACS website, CEVN, gabriel, school website