



# Child Safe Code of Conduct

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## 1. Purpose

This Child Safe Code of Conduct outlines appropriate standards of behaviour towards students for all adults in the College environment and MLC's expectations for compliance. 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.

It is College policy that any breach of the Child Safe Code of Conduct is a child safety incident that must be reported internally. Any breach that meets the threshold for external reporting must also be reported to the relevant authority.

Our Child Safe Program also includes a Staff and Student Professional Boundaries policy that provides detailed guidance for all Staff, Volunteers and Contractors on how to maintain professional boundaries between students and adults at MLC.

## 2. Scope

The Child Safe Code of Conduct applies to:

- all staff members, including boarding premises staff, non-teaching staff and temporary or casual staff;
- the College Board of Directors;
- Volunteers;
- Parents/carers and other adult family members of students;
- Third Party Contractors;
- External Education Providers;
- Teacher candidates or other tertiary students on placement at the College;
- visitors.

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

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 Safe Code of Conduct in a particular matter, the relevant staff member, Volunteer or Contractor must seek advice from their professional or occupational body and/or the Senior Child Protection Officer and must advise the Principal of their proposed course of action.

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 (Kew including the Tiddeman Boarding House, MLC Banksia and MLC Marshmead)
- online or virtual environments made available or authorised by the College for use by a student (including email, intranet systems, 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.

### 3. Code of Conduct

The Child Safe 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. For more detailed guidance refer to the College's Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Policy. Boarding premises staff must also refer to their relevant Staff Handbook (Tiddeman Boarding House or MLC Marshmead), for additional guidance regarding professional boundaries in the context of boarding.

This Child Safe Code of Conduct is made available to all members of the College Community via our public website. The Code is reviewed annually and approved by the Board of Directors.

#### 3.1. Acceptable Behaviours

All members of the MLC Community are responsible for promoting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of students by:

- upholding and acting in accordance with MLC's Statement of Commitment to Child Safety at all times
- complying with applicable guidelines published by the College with respect to child safety, such as the Professional Boundaries Policy
- behaving as a positive role model to students
- promoting the safety, welfare and wellbeing of students
- being vigilant and proactive with regard to student safety and wellbeing, including child protection issues
- providing age-appropriate supervision for students
- treating all students with respect
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability and/or learning needs
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of linguistically and/or culturally diverse students and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- supporting students and families of diverse sexuality and/or gender identity and act to promote their participation
- using positive and affirming language towards students
- encouraging students to 'have a say' and participate, and then listen to them with respect
- respecting cultural, religious and political differences
- helping to provide an open, safe and supportive environment for all students to interact, and socialise
- intervening when students are engaging in inappropriate bullying behaviour towards others or acting in a humiliating or vilifying way, reporting any breaches of this Child Safe Code of Conduct
- reporting concerns about child safety to one of the College's Child Protection Officers promptly, making a record of these concerns in line with College processes and ensuring that your legal obligations to report allegations externally are met
- where an allegation of child abuse or other harm is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student involved is safe as well and any other students who may be impacted.
- calling the Police on Triple Zero (000) if you have immediate concerns for a student's safety

- respecting the privacy of students and their families and only disclosing information to people who have a need to know.

### 3.2. Unacceptable Behaviours

All members of the MLC Community must not:

- Engage in any form of inappropriate behaviour towards students or expose students to such behaviour.
- Discriminate against any student on the basis of characteristics that are protected in anti-discrimination legislation or express personal views that support or promote such discrimination
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- Engage in open discussions of an adult nature in the presence of students (note: this does not relate to documented curriculum content that may cover sexual and intimate relationships)
- 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 those as expressly outlined in our Restrictive Interventions Policy) 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.
- 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 child.
- Engage in meetings with a child that is not your own, outside of school hours and without permission from the College and the child’s parent.
- Engage in inappropriate personal communications with a student through any medium, including any online contact or interactions with a student.
- Take or publish (including online) photos, movies or recordings of a student without parental/carer consent.
- Post online any identifying information about a student unless it is necessary for the College’s activities, or you have consent from the student and or their parents/guardians. Identifying information includes such things as their: full name; age; e-mail address; telephone number; residence; school; or details of a club or group they may attend.
- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse or other harm.

### 3.3. The Child Safe Code of Conduct and Reportable Conduct

Our Child Safety Codes of Conduct outline the expected standards of behaviour for all Staff. However, breaches of these Codes of Conduct will not always be Reportable Conduct. For example, a Volunteer accepting a social media “friend” request from a student would be a breach of our Child Safety Codes of Conduct but may not amount to Reportable Conduct.

These kind of breaches of our Child Safe Codes of Conduct are dealt with at the College level and MLC does not need to report them to the Commission for Children and Young People.

### **3.4. Agreement to the Child Safe Code of Conduct**

A copy of this Child Safe Code of Conduct is provided to all members of the College Board, Staff, relevant Volunteers and Contractors at induction, or otherwise prior to them commencing work at the College. It is also communicated via refresher training at regular intervals for all Staff, Direct Contact Volunteers.

All Staff as well as Direct Contact and Regular Volunteers must acknowledge that they have read and will adhere to this Child Safe Code of Conduct prior to commencing work at the College.

This Child Safe Code of Conduct forms part of the contract between the College and Direct and Regular Contact Contractors. Therefore, all Direct Contact and Regular Contractors are deemed to have agreed to adhere to the Child Safe Code of Conduct upon signing the contract or upon commencing work at the College.

### **3.5. Consequences for Breach of the Child Safe Code of Conduct**

Staff, Volunteers and Contractors who breach this Child Safe 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 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 Safe Code of Conduct, Methodist Ladies' College will take appropriate action.

### **3.6. Report Any Concerns**

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.

Note that reporting internally does not change any obligation that Staff may have under legislation to report to an external authority.

Our Child Safe 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 abuse incidents or concerns to relevant authorities. For more information, refer to our procedures for Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns.

Students are provided with information about and encouraged to use multiple pathways to raise child safety incidents or concerns at the College, including breaches of the Child Safe Code of Conduct.

External Education Providers, Indirect Contact Volunteers, students, 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 Vice Principal who is the College's Senior Child Protection Officer, by phoning 9274

6333 or the MLC Emergency Line on 9274 8100, or emailing [childsafety@mlc.vic.edu.au](mailto:childsafety@mlc.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 Triple Zero (000).**

#### **4. Related Documents**

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Parent Code of Conduct
- Student Wellbeing Policy
- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- Reportable Conduct Policy
- Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Policy

## 5. Governance

| Document Details            |   |  |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Title:</b>               | MLC Child Safe Program – Child Safe Code of Conduct |  |
| <b>Policy Approver:</b>     | MLC Board   |  |
| <b>Policy Owner:</b>        | Vice Principal                                      |  |
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| <b>Date of Next Review:</b> | 2024  |  |

  

| Version Control |           |   |
|-----------------|-----------|---|
| Version         | Date      | Description   |
| V1              | Feb 2021  | Replaces MLC Relationships Policy                           |
| V2              | May 2022  | Updated to comply with new Victorian Child Safety Standards |
| V3              | July 2023 | Minor updates   |

  

| Audience          | Publication Location             |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| MLC Staff         | MLC Staff Hub > Document Central |
| MLC Students      | MLC Student Hub                  |
| Parents/Guardians | myMLCfamily                      |
| Wider community   | MLC external website & Canto     |