

HIGHVIEW COLLEGE

CHILD SAFE CODE OF CONDUCT



Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct

Central to our mission, Highview College has an unequivocal commitment to fostering the dignity, self-esteem and integrity of children and young people, and providing them with a safe, supportive and enriching environment to develop spiritually, physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially.

Purpose

The Highview Child Safe Code of Conduct has a specific focus on safeguarding children and young people against sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse or neglect. It is intended to complement child protection legislation, school policies/procedures, professional standards, codes and ethics as these apply to staff and personnel, and covers all interactions within the community including face to face and video conferencing. All staff, volunteers, contractors, allied health workers, visitors, religious clergy, College Board, third party providers and Student Host Families are expected to actively contribute to a school culture that respects the dignity of its members. Additionally, they are required to observe and sign the Child Safe Code of Conduct in support of the child-safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children and young people.

The Child Safe Code of Conduct is made available to all staff, families and students via our public website and on the College Learning Management System, SEQTA.

Highview College Context

Staff need to be cognisant that many Highview College students live in small rural communities and may not have the support of an extended family or community therefore staff must report all Child Safe concerns to a Highview Child Safe Officer. Staff must attend to all reporting obligations if they have formed a reasonable belief that child abuse has or is occurring.

Acceptable Behaviours

All staff, the Principal, allied health workers, visitors, religious, clergy, College Board, student placement staff, volunteers, contractors, Third-Party Providers, and Student Host Families are responsible for supporting the safety of children and young people in face to face and video conferencing interactions by:

- adhering to Highview Colleges Child-Safe Policies and upholding the school's statement of commitment to child safety at all times
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children and young people from abuse
- treating everyone in the school community with respect
- taking into account the needs of all children and students
- reporting any allegations of child abuse to the Principal or her delegate
- treating all children and young people in the school community with respect; modelling positive and respectful relationships and acting in a manner that sustains a safe, educational and pastoral environment
- addressing conflict and discipline matters through restorative processes
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children and young people, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child have been/are being abused or that they are worried about their safety or the safety of another child

- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child's self-identification)
- upholding a zero tolerance to racism and expectation that staff and volunteers will address incidents of racism
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children and young people with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, students in out-of-home care and students who identify within the LGBTIQ+ community
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children and young people with a disability
- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not alone with a child or young person. Adults should not be sleeping in the same cabin or room or using the same bathroom as the child or young person while away on camps, trips or excursions
- understanding and complying with all obligations as they relate to the reportable conduct scheme including reporting allegations of reportable conduct in accordance with the schools reportable conduct policy
- when in the course of normal working practice on campus when staff members are alone with students (e.g. instrumental teachers, counselling staff, teachers who wish to meet with students to assist them with their learning program), the following protocols should apply: if the door is closed, ensure that the student is visible from a window and if the meeting is in a classroom, keep the door open and sit close to the door.
- If a staff member is meeting with a student on a video conferencing platform, they should ensure they present in a professional setting and that the student has an adult in their near vicinity or the staff member has a colleague in a near vicinity..
- If a staff member on a camp or trip is meeting with a student in the student's bedroom the staff member should not sit on the student bed and always keep the bedroom door open
- reporting any child safety concerns to the College Principal
- 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.
- understanding and complying with all reporting obligations as they relate to failure to disclose, mandatory reporting and reporting under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.)
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that the child(ren) or young person/people are safe

Unacceptable Behaviours

All staff, the Principal, allied health workers, visitors, religious, clergy, College Board, student placement staff, volunteers, contractors, Third-Party Providers, and Student Host Families are responsible for supporting the safety of children and young people in face to face and video conferencing interactions must not:

- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse

- develop any 'special' relationships with children or young people that could be seen as favoritism (e.g. the offering of gifts, special treatment for specific children or young people, use of nicknames)
- exhibit behaviours with children or young people which may be construed as unnecessarily physical
- put children or young people at risk of abuse
- meeting with children or young people in rooms with a closed door and no line of sight
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or young people or do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children or young people which is a substantial departure from the accepted standard (e.g. personal social activities, conversations about sexuality, marital status, conversations about complex moral issues that are not age and stage appropriate.)
- use inappropriate language with or show inappropriate images to children or young people
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children or young people
- discriminate against any child or young person, including because of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or disability
- have contact with a child, young person or their family outside of school without the knowledge and permission of the Principal or her delegate for the purpose of the service you are providing to the student. (e.g. after-hours tutoring, private instrumental lessons, child minding or sport coaching)
- initiate unnecessary online contact through video conferencing with a child or young person
- have any personal or direct online contact with a child, young person or their family unless approved by the Principal
- exchange personal contact details such as personal phone number, social networking sites or email addresses unless you are a third-party provider that is approved by the College.
- photograph or video a child or young person without the consent of the parent or guardians
- work with children or young people while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- consume alcohol or drugs at school or at school events in the presence of children or young people unless it is approved by the Principal.

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.

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:

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

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 and young people to feel safe and protected, including:

- using positive reinforcement and avoiding abusive, harassing or discriminatory language
- coaching students to compete in a fair and friendly manner
- asking for the student's permission prior to physical contact with a student by a coach or other adult during a sporting or other recreational activity
- avoiding situations where an adult may be alone with a student such as in a dressing or change room, first aid room, dormitory unless there is an emergency situation

Consequences of Breaching this Policy

Where a member of staff is suspected of breaching this Child Safe Code of Conduct, a formal performance management procedure may commence as outlined in the Highview College Enterprise Agreement 2023-2025.

Where the Principal is suspected of breaching this Code of Conduct, the concerned party is advised to contact the Chair of the College Board.

Where any other member of the school community, including volunteers and contractors, are suspected of breaching this code, the school is to take appropriate action, including (if applicable) in accordance with the *PROTECT: Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools* policy.

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

I confirm that I have been provided with a copy of the above Code of Conduct and that I have read and understand this Code:

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

The Child Safe Code of Conduct will be reviewed by the Principal and Executive Team every three years or upon advice that legislation relating to such matters requires immediate change of policy.

Reviewed and Ratified by College Board February 2024.