



St Thomas the Apostle School

Child Safety Code of Conduct - 2019

(To be Reviewed in 2022)

Rationale:

Central to the mission of St Thomas is 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.

Aims:

This Code of Conduct has a specific focus on safeguarding children and young people at St Thomas' School against sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse or neglect. It is intended to complement child protection legislation, school policies/procedures and professional standards, codes or ethics as these apply to staff and personnel.

All staff, volunteers, contractors, clergy and Board members at St Thomas' School are expected to actively contribute to a school culture that respects the dignity of its members and affirms 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 as listed below.

Implementation:

Acceptable Behaviours

All staff, volunteers, contractors, clergy and Board members are responsible for supporting the safety of children by:

- adhering to the school's ethical framework and upholding the school's 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 (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 have 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 policy towards discrimination)
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, during personal care activities)
- 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).
- understanding and complying with all reporting obligations as they relate to mandatory reporting and reporting under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.)
- reporting any child safety concerns to the school's leadership (or Child Safety Officer if the school has appointed someone to this role)
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe.

Unacceptable Behaviours

Staff and volunteers 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, such as 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, because of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or disability
- have contact with a child or their family outside of school without the school's leadership or Child Safety Officer's (if the school has appointed someone to this role) 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 child (including by social media, email, instant messaging etc.) or their family (unless necessary e.g. by providing families with eNewsletters or assisting students with their school work),
- use any personal communication channels/device such as a personal email account
- exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking sites or email addresses

- photograph or video a child without the consent of the parent or guardians
 - work with children while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
 - consume alcohol* or drugs at school or at school events in the presence of children.
- (NB: *The exception to this is the Parish and School Fair which occurs in October)

Where members of staff have a pre-existing personal connection with a student's family, such as if they are related or have maintained an ongoing friendship, contact outside of school hours may be appropriate. In such cases, the principal must be made aware of this contact and the reasons for why such contact should be permitted.

Evaluation

This policy will be amended as required and reviewed every three years as part of the school's review cycle.