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Child Safety Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct has been developed to outline the standards of behaviour expected of all employees, directors, contractors, consultants, other professionals, and volunteers of Fernbrook School in respect to Child Safety.

The Code of Conduct should be read in conjunction with all Fernbrook School policies and procedures.

Definition

For the purpose of this Code of Conduct, the use of the word 'Staff' includes all employees, directors, contractors, consultants, other professionals, and volunteers.

Expectations of employees, directors, and volunteers

Staff are responsible for supporting the safety of children. They are required to follow child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, by:

- adhering to the Child Safety Policy at all times
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a child
- treating everyone in the school community appropriately and with respect at all times
- modelling appropriate and respectful relationships
- behaving in a manner that supports a safe learning environment
- using appropriate language
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are communicating that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety or the safety of another child
- promoting the safety, participation, and empowerment of all children
- reporting any child safety concerns or allegations of child abuse to the appropriate authorities

- understanding and complying with all reporting obligations as they relate to mandatory reporting and reporting under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.)
- ensuring the immediate safety of affected child(ren) if an allegation of child abuse is made
- adhering to the VIT Code of Conduct (for VIT registered teachers)
- holding a valid Working with Children Check (for non VIT registered staff) for employees or volunteers, whichever is appropriate to the individual
- notifying the principal or school board of any activity or offence which could result in a cancellation or change to the currency of the VIT/WWC card

Staff must not:

- develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children)
- put children at risk of harm or abuse (for example, by locking doors)
- 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 with or in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities)
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- express personal views on cultures, race, gender, or sexuality in the presence of children
- discriminate against any child, including because of religion, culture, race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, or disability
- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.
- exhibit behaviours or engage in activities or physical contact with students not justified by the educational, therapeutic, or service delivery context.

By observing these standards, you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code if seen, to the Fernbrook School Principal.

Required reporting

Staff are required to immediately report to the principal (or in the case of the principal, to the board) if they:

- are charged with or convicted of a serious offence,
- are the subject of an Apprehended Violence Order,
- become aware of a serious crime committed by another employee.

Staff of the school must immediately report to the principal:

- any concerns they may have about the safety, welfare and wellbeing of a child or young person,
- any concerns they may have about the inappropriate actions of any other person that involves children or young people.

Mandatory Reporting

Under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005, professionals, including registered teachers, principals, and nurses, are required to act in the best interests of the child which includes reporting to child protection authorities all allegations or disclosures of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect, and when a reasonable belief is formed that a child has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed.

Employees refer to the school's Mandatory Reporting Policy for further information.

Appropriate use of digital technology

The school provides electronic communication facilities for its staff for educational and administrative purposes. It monitors and views data stored or transmitted using the school's facilities.

While using digital technology at any time, staff:

- will not reveal their password/s, to any of the children
- will only take and/or store photos or videos of children for school use
- will not create, use, or share material of an offensive or inappropriate nature
- will be polite and use appropriate language when communicating electronically
- will not search for anything that is illegal, dangerous, or offensive.
- will inform the school if they become aware of something that is dangerous, offensive, bullying, discriminatory, or inappropriate use of equipment, programs or the internet including communications by other staff at Fernbrook School, whether at school or at home
- will not have any online contact with a child currently enrolled at the school that is not related to school or class activities

Duty of Care and Work Health and Safety

Duty of care

By law, school employees have a duty of care to children in their charge, and must take all reasonable steps to protect students from risks of harm that can be reasonably foreseen. Duty of care applies during all activities and functions conducted or arranged by the school. The duty encompasses a wide range of matters, including, but not limited to:

- the provision of adequate supervision,
- ensuring grounds, premises and equipment are safe for use during school hours,
- assessing, mitigating, and managing risks associated with activities,
- implementing strategies to prevent bullying or any form of abuse from occurring in school or in an off-campus school environment, and
- providing medical assistance (if competent to do so) or seeking assistance from a medically trained person to aid a child who is injured or unwell at school.

The standard of care that is required, for example the degree of supervision, needs to be commensurate with a child's maturity and abilities.

Work health and safety

All staff have a responsibility under work health and safety legislation to take care of their own health and safety at work. It is the responsibility of the staff to ensure that their activities do not place at risk the health and safety of their co-workers, students, or other persons they may come into contact with at the school. Considerations of safety relate to both the physical and psychological wellbeing of individuals.

Privacy

Staff must only use confidential information:

- for the work-related purpose it was intended,
- when authorised to do so by legislation, and
- otherwise with the permission of the principal.

Staff must ensure that confidential information, in any form, cannot be accessed by unauthorised people.

Confidentiality must be maintained for all official documentation and information which is not publicly available, or which has not been published.

Please refer to the Privacy Policy.

Record keeping

Staff must not destroy or remove records without appropriate authority.

Teachers responsible for assessing and recording comments for students' work must do so accurately, fairly and in a manner consistent with the relevant policies and procedures of the school.

Existing professional codes of conduct

This Code of Conduct does not replace or change responsibilities for Victorian public sector employees, the Victorian teaching profession Codes of Conduct and Ethics, and other professional or occupational codes of conduct that may impose certain obligations or regulations.

This Code of Conduct is intended to be complementary to those other professional or occupational codes of conduct.

Breaches of the Child Safety Code of Conduct

Staff hold a position of trust and are accountable for their actions. The consequences of inappropriate behaviour and breaches of this code will depend on the nature of the breach.

Prior to the formal reporting of any observed or suspected breach, a discussion with the principal or as appropriate with a director on the board should take place.

If a reasonable belief of a breach has been formed and the breach contravenes the law of the land, then it must be reported to the relevant legislative authority. Where possible, this should be done in consultation with the principal.

Factors the school may consider when deciding what action to take may include:

- the seriousness of the breach,
- the likelihood of the breach occurring again,
- whether the person has committed the breach more than once,
- the risk the breach poses to employees, students, or any others, and
- whether the breach would be serious enough to warrant formal disciplinary action.

Actions that may be taken by the school in respect of a breach of the code include

- remedial action, including relevant coaching and training, and
- disciplinary action, ranging from a warning to termination of employment.

Other than a response required by law, the school will reserve the right to determine the response to any breach of this code.

Related Policies

Child safety policy

Mandatory reporting policy

On-site supervision policy

Excursion and activity policy

Student welfare policy

Privacy policy

Bullying and harassment policy

Incident and illness policy

Behaviour management policy

Occupational health and safety policy

Technologies policy

Complaints and grievances policy

First aid policy

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