



PATTERSON RIVER
SECONDARY COLLEGE

CHILD SAFETY CODE OF CONDUCT

2020-2023

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1. Policy Background

The staff Code of Conduct was developed in 2016 in order to take account of VIT code of conduct and new requirements in relation to the VRQA Child Safety Standards.

2. Purpose Statement

Patterson River is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Our school community recognises the importance of, and a responsibility for, ensuring our school is a safe, supportive and enriching environment which respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of children and young people, and enables them to thrive in their learning and development.

This Code of Conduct aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur. It also assists in understanding how to avoid or better manage risky behaviours and situations. It is intended to complement child protection legislation, Department policy, school policies and procedures and professional standards, codes or ethics as these apply to staff and other personnel.

The Principal and school leaders of the College will support implementation and monitoring of the Code of Conduct, and will plan, implement and monitor arrangements to provide inclusive, safe and orderly schools and other learning environments. The Principal and school leaders will also provide information and support to enable the Code of Conduct to operate effectively.

All staff, contractors, volunteers and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work are required to comply with the Code of Conduct by observing expectations for appropriate behaviour below. The Code of Conduct applies in all school situations, including school camps and in the use of digital technology and social media.

3. Guidelines

Acceptable behaviours

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work individually, we are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

- upholding the school's statement of commitment to child safety at all times (see child safety policy)
- treating students and families in the school community with respect both within the school environment and outside the school environment as part of normal social and community activities.
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, 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 students
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability
- reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to the Principal, Assistant Principal (School Operations) or Student Wellbeing Coordinator.
- understanding and complying with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) as they relate to protecting children from harm or abuse.
- if child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm.

Unacceptable behaviours

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work we must not:

- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse
- develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to ‘grooming’ behaviour (for example, offering gifts)
- exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with students which may be interpreted as abusive and not justified by the educational, therapeutic, or service delivery context
- ignore behaviours by other adults towards students when they appear to be overly familiar or inappropriate
- discuss content of an intimate nature or use sexual innuendo with students, except where it occurs relevantly in the context of parental guidance, delivering the education curriculum or a therapeutic setting
- treat a child unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity.
- communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc) except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to school work or extra-curricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter
- photograph or video a child in a school environment except in accordance with school policy or where required for duty of care purposes¹
- in the school environment or at other school events where students are present, consume alcohol contrary to school policy² or take illicit drugs under any circumstances.

Additional Guidelines for VIT Registered Teachers

Victorian Institute of Teaching Professional Code of Conduct

SECTION 1 - PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Teachers’ professional conduct is characterised by the quality of the relationships they have with their students, their students’ parents, (guardians and caregivers), families and communities and their colleagues.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

PRINCIPLE 1.1: TEACHERS PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL STUDENTS TO LEARN

The main focus of teaching is student learning. Teachers demonstrate their commitment to student learning by knowing their students well, respecting their individual differences and catering for their individual abilities, maintaining a safe and challenging learning environment, accepting professional responsibility for the provision of quality teaching, having high expectations of every student, recognising and developing each student’s abilities, skills and talents, considering all viewpoints fairly, communicating well and appropriately with their students.

PRINCIPLE 1.2: TEACHERS TREAT THEIR STUDENTS WITH COURTESY AND DIGNITY

Teachers work to create an environment which promotes mutual respect, model and engage in respectful and impartial language, protect students from intimidation, embarrassment, humiliation or harm, enhance student autonomy and sense of self-worth and encourage students to develop and reflect on their own values, respect a student’s privacy in sensitive matters, such as health or family problems, and only reveal confidential matters when appropriate. That is, if the student has consented to the information being used in a certain way to prevent or lessen a serious threat to life, health, safety or welfare of a person (including the student) as part of an investigation into unlawful activity, if the disclosure is required or mandated by law to prevent a crime or enforce the law, refrain from discussing students’ personal problems in situations where the information will not be treated confidentially, use consequences commensurate with the offence when disciplining students.

¹ SPAG: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/photoandfilm.aspx> . The policy says the school should get consent before taking and publishing photos of a student. This applies every time a photo is taken. The same policy applies for excursions and school activities.

² SPAG: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/alcohol.aspx> . The policy says the school must obtain school council approval before alcohol can be consumed on school grounds or at a school activity. The policy says staff members should not consume alcohol during camps and excursions. It is silent on whether they can consume alcohol at other school events where students are present, this is a matter that the school needs to decide upon – draft text is provided in the guidance fact sheet

PRINCIPLE 1.3: TEACHERS WORK WITHIN THE LIMITS OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE

In fulfilling their role, teachers carry out a wide range of responsibilities. They support students by knowing their strengths and the limits of their professional expertise. Teachers seek to ensure that they have the physical, mental and emotional capacity to carry out their professional responsibilities, are aware of the role of other professionals and agencies and when students should be referred to them for assistance, are truthful when making statements about their qualifications and competencies.

PRINCIPLE 1.4: TEACHERS MAINTAIN OBJECTIVITY IN THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

In their professional role, teachers do not behave as a friend or a parent. They interact with students without displaying bias or preference, make decisions in students' best interests, do not draw students into their personal agendas, do not seek recognition at the expense of professional objectivity and goals.

PRINCIPLE 1.5: TEACHERS ARE ALWAYS IN A PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE STUDENTS IN THEIR SCHOOL, WHETHER AT SCHOOL OR NOT

Teachers hold a unique position of influence and trust that should not be violated or compromised. They exercise their responsibilities in ways that recognise that there are limits or boundaries to their relationships with students. The following examples outline some of those limits. A professional relationship will be violated if a teacher has a sexual relationship with a student, uses sexual innuendo or inappropriate language and/or material with students, touches a student without a valid reason, holds conversations of a personal nature or has contact with a student via written or electronic means including email, letters, telephone, text messages or chat lines, without a valid context, accepts gifts, which could be reasonably perceived as being used to influence them, from students or their parents. A professional relationship may be compromised if a teacher attends parties or socialises with students, invites a student or students back to their home, particularly if no-one else is present.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS (GUARDIANS, CAREGIVERS), FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

PRINCIPLE 1.6: TEACHERS MAINTAIN A PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENTS (GUARDIANS AND CAREGIVERS)

Teachers should be respectful of and courteous to parents. Teachers should consider parents' perspectives when making decisions which have an impact on the education or wellbeing of a student, communicate and consult with parents in a timely, understandable and sensitive manner, take appropriate action when responding to parental concerns.

PRINCIPLE 1.7: TEACHERS WORK IN COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS' FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Teachers recognise that their students come from a diverse range of cultural contexts and seek to work collaboratively with students' families and communities within those contexts.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH COLLEAGUES

PRINCIPLE 1.8: COLLEGIALITY IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE WORK OF TEACHERS

Teachers demonstrate collegiality by treating each other with courtesy and respect, valuing the input of their colleagues, using appropriate forums for constructive debate on professional matters, sharing expertise and knowledge in a variety of collaborative contexts, respecting different approaches to teaching, providing support for each other, particularly those new to the profession, sharing information relating to the wellbeing of students.

SECTION 2 - PERSONAL CONDUCT PRINCIPLE

2.1: THE PERSONAL CONDUCT OF A TEACHER WILL HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE PROFESSIONAL STANDING OF THAT TEACHER AND ON THE PROFESSION AS A WHOLE

Although there is no definitive boundary between the personal and professional conduct of a teacher, it is expected that teachers will:

- a) be positive role models at school and in the community
- b) respect the rule of law and provide a positive example in the performance of civil obligations
- c) not exploit their position for personal or financial gain
- d) ensure that their personal or financial interests do not interfere with the performance of their duties
- e) act with discretion and maintain confidentiality when discussing workplace issues.

SECTION 3 - PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

PRINCIPLE 3.1: TEACHERS VALUE THEIR PROFESSIONALISM AND SET AND MAINTAIN HIGH STANDARDS OF COMPETENCE

Teachers:

- a) are knowledgeable in their areas of expertise
- b) are committed to pursuing their own professional learning
- c) complete their duties in a responsible, thorough and timely way.

PRINCIPLE 3.2: TEACHERS ARE AWARE OF THE LEGAL REQUIREMENTS THAT PERTAIN TO THEIR PROFESSION.

In particular, they are cognisant of their legal responsibilities in relation to discrimination, harassment and vilification, negligence, mandatory reporting, privacy, occupational health and safety, teacher registration.

Social Media

Staff members are not to be 'friends' or 'follow' students on social media. Exceptions due to exceptional circumstances can only be made with the written permission of the Principal.

Out of hours contact with students

Out of hours contact with students must be covered with informed consent by parents and school approval via the camps, excursions and activities application.

Reporting and raising concerns about staff/volunteer conduct

Staff members are advised to raise concerns of professional misconduct and/or failure to adhere to the school's professional code of conduct of another staff, contractor or volunteer with a member of the Principal Class as a matter of urgency.

Changing rooms and changing clothes, toilet and bathing arrangements

Unless otherwise avoidable, teachers are required to use alternative toilets and change rooms to students and are not to put themselves in a situation in which they change clothes in the presence of students. At school, events such as swimming sports and athletics, the school will place a supervising teacher on the outside of the toilet / change rooms in order to monitor the movement of people in and out of the change rooms. If assistance is required within the toilets, then only staff members of the same gender as the change rooms may enter the room in the first instance.

Meeting with a student in private

If a staff member is to meet with a student in private in the workplace, then the staff member should ensure that the following is adhered to:

- The meeting space door is left open
- If privacy of conversation is required then there should be a direct line of sight into the room (e.g.blinds drawn)
- Professional context for the meeting

Private vehicle

As per DET advice, staff are to avoid using their own private vehicles for transporting students wherever possible. If it is deemed necessary to transport a student in a private vehicle:

- Reasons must be outlined under 'administrative details'
- Name of the staff member driving and their vehicle registration number must be stated on the permission slip
- The vehicle must have comprehensive insurance.

Physical contact and physical intervention

Staff members should not touch a student without valid reason. Physical intervention should only ever:

- be used as a last resort to protect safety of students, when other less intrusive interventions have been ineffective or would not be sufficient for the teacher to discharge their duty of care responsibilities to all students
- involve the least restrictive approach and the least amount of force necessary to avert the danger applied
- be used as long as there is a present danger and should be stopped as soon as the danger has been averted.

Overnight Camps

Supervision must include both male and female staff for overnight camps/tours. When planning a camp, provision should be made for ensuring that ratios are covered in the event that one staff member is required to take a student to hospital when camping in a remote location. Consideration must also be given for transportation issues that arise in this situation as well.

Examples of 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 which 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, including 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 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 by social media, email, instant messaging etc) or their family (unless necessary eg by providing families with e-newsletters 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 guardian
- work with children whilst under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- consume alcohol or drugs at school or at school events in the presence of children.

4. Links

Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) www.vit.vic.edu.au [Code of conduct](#)

Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority

Child safe standards website (all schools): www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe

Government Schools

Website: www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation/Pages/childsafestandards

Email: child.safe.schools@edumail.vic.gov.au

5. Review

This policy is to be reviewed in November 2023

