

OLSH College Child Safety Code of Conduct

Preamble

The Vision of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College (OLSH College) attests to us being *'heart people who are faith filled, reverence relationships, pursue excellence and touch the hearts of others'*.

This Code of Conduct gives expression to our Vision and to the College's steadfast resolve to provide a safe and pastoral environment for students. We hold the care, safety and wellbeing of our students and all children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of Catholic education, and we draw inspiration from the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the Gospel.

*Regnet Christus! May Christ Reign!
In aeternum (forever)*

Purpose and Scope

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets out the expected behaviour of all OLSH College staff and associates in fostering a culture of child safety in our environments. All OLSH College staff and associates, and any other adult involved at the College in child-connected work, are required to comply with this Code of Conduct by observing expectations for appropriate behaviour.

This Code of Conduct is intended to complement child protection legislation, related OLSH College policies and procedures, and other professional standards, codes or ethics that apply to College staff and associates. The Code is signed by staff and personnel to ensure there is a shared understanding of and commitment to the College's child-safe culture and practices.

The Code applies across all physical and online environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided by our College for a student's use (for example, a school camp). The Code enables every adult at OLSH College to understand the important role they play in ensuring that the wellbeing and safety of children and young people are at the forefront of their actions and decision-making.

Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability, those unable to live at home, international students, and students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) students.

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

OLSH College has zero tolerance for any form of child abuse and is deeply committed to upholding and embedding the highest standards of child safety across our College.

We are guided by our Catholic faith and our unwavering belief in the unique and unrepeatable dignity of every person in our care. We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and young people.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our College environments. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

Particular attention is given to the needs of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our College, and any instances identified will be investigated and appropriate sanctions and disciplinary action taken as well as any identified improvements adopted.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in OLSH College has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices and to seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

Expectations – Acceptable Behaviours

All staff are required to declare and sign this Child Safety Code of Conduct upon appointment or engagement.

Staff and associates of OLSH College must:

- Adhere to the OLSH College child safety and wellbeing policies and uphold the OLSH College statement of commitment to child safety, at all times
- Treat students and families in our College community with respect, both within and outside the College environment

- Listen and respond to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they disclose that they or another child or student has been abused, or that they are worried about their safety or the safety of another child or student
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal students, students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, students with a disability, international students, students who are unable to live at home and students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) students
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries around students. This includes avoiding unmonitored communications and ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not alone with a student
- Report any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to the Principal, the College Leadership Team or Child Safety Leader
- Understand and comply with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) as they relate to mandatory reporting and reporting under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic)
- Understand and comply with all obligations as they relate to the reportable conduct scheme including reporting allegations of reportable conduct in accordance with the College's reportable conduct policy
- If child abuse is suspected, ensure as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm.

Unacceptable Conduct

Staff and associates of OLSH College must not:

- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse
- Develop any 'special' relationships with students that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children)
- Develop any 'special' relationships with students that develops a relationship of dependency, that exploits an individual's vulnerability to form an intimate relationship, and/or that could amount to 'grooming' behaviour
- 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 (for example, 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, disability or another protected attribute
- Work with children while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs

- Exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with students which may be interpreted as 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 in a therapeutic setting
- Treat a child unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity or another protected attribute
- Communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting or other digital technologies), except where that communication is reasonable in the circumstances, related to schoolwork or extra-curricular activities, or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter
- Make a 'friend' request to a student or accept a 'friend' request from a student through a social media platform
- 'Follow' a student on a social media platform, unless it is objectively appropriate (for example, where the student is also a family member of the staff member)
- Photograph or video a student without their consent and/or that of their parent, guardian or carer, except where required for duty of care purposes.

Teachers

Teaching staff 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 issued by the Victorian Institute of Teaching (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.

Reporting Concerns

All breaches and suspected breaches of this Code of Conduct must be reported to the Principal or the College's Child Safety Leader.

The College's Child Protection Reporting Obligations Policy should be read together with current Victorian Government PROTECT and Four Critical Actions on how to identify key risk

indicators of child abuse, and procedures for reporting child abuse concerns and incidents to relevant College staff and authorities.

Whenever there are concerns that a child or student is in immediate danger, Victoria Police should be contacted on 000.

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

Breaches of this Code

Where a member of staff is suspected of breaching this Code of Conduct, the Principal may start the process for managing this under the applicable Catholic Education Enterprise Agreement and any applicable College employment or conduct procedures). In certain contexts, a report may be required to Victoria Police, DFFH Child Protection, the VIT and/or the Social Service Regulator (SSR). The outcomes of these reports and follow-up investigations may result in disciplinary consequences. In the case of serious breaches, termination of employment may result.

Where a volunteer, contractor, other service provider, religious and/or chaplain involved with the College is suspected of breaching any obligation within this Code, the Principal will take appropriate action in accordance with the College's *Child Protection Reporting Responsibilities Policy*. In certain contexts, a report may be made to an external authority and may result in the termination of the person's contract or engagement.

Definitions

In this policy, the following definitions apply:

Associates means Board members, volunteers, contractors, other service providers, religious and chaplains involved with OLSH College.

Child abuse includes any act committed against a child or young person involving:

- a sexual offence
- grooming
- physical violence
- serious emotional or psychological harm
- serious neglect.

Child and Young Person: A child is legally defined as a person under the age of 18 years. A young person is any person who comes under or may come under the care, supervision or authority of the school.

Child Protection means the Victorian Child Protection Service within the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH), being the statutory authority responsible for receiving and investigating reports of children who may be in need of protection.

Child safety encompasses matters related to protecting all children from abuse, managing the risk of abuse, providing support to a child at risk of abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of abuse.

Family violence is defined under the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic.) to include behaviour that causes a child to hear, witness or be exposed to the effects of family violence such as abusive, threatening, controlling or coercive behaviour. While family violence does not form part of the official definition of 'child abuse' in the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic.), the impact of family violence on a child can be a form of child abuse, for example, where it causes serious emotional or psychological harm to a child. A child can also be a direct victim of family violence.

Grooming refers to predatory conduct undertaken by an adult (18 years or over) to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time. It is a sexual offence under section 49M of the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.).

Mandatory report is a report made to Child Protection, by a person mandated under the *Children, Youth and Families Act* (2005), that is based on a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection from injury that results from abuse or neglect or harm caused as a result of abuse (emotional, physical or sexual) or neglect, including medical neglect.

Mandatory reporter is a person(s) required under the *Children, Youth and Families Act* (2005) to make a report to Child Protection if they believe a child is in need of protection from physical injury or sexual abuse (emotional, physical or sexual) or neglect, including medical neglect.

Mandatory reporters include (among others) registered medical practitioners, registered nurses and midwives, VIT registered teachers and early childhood teachers, school principals, school counsellors, police officers, registered psychologists, and persons in religious ministry.

Non-mandatory report is a report of an incident, disclosure or suspicion made by a person who is not subject to a mandatory reporting obligation.

Non-mandatory reporter is a person(s) who is not subject to a mandatory reporting obligation but who holds professional, moral (and sometimes legal) obligations to report a child protection incident, disclosure or suspicion.

Physical violence occurs when a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm from a non-accidental injury or injuries inflicted by another person. Physical violence can be inflicted in many ways including beating, shaking, burning or using weapons (such as belts and paddles). Physical harm may also be caused during student fights.

Reasonable belief is when a person is concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person, they must assess that concern to determine if a report should be made to the relevant agency. This process of considering all relevant information and observations is known as forming a 'reasonable belief'. A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof but is more than mere rumour or speculation. A 'reasonable belief' is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

Reportable conduct covers allegations or convictions of child abuse or misconduct toward children where the source of the misconduct or conviction is an employee of an organisation. It is defined under the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic.) to mean a sexual offence, sexual misconduct or physical violence committed against, with or in the presence of a child, behaviour causing significant emotional or psychological harm to a child, or significant neglect of a child.

Reportable conduct employee allegation means any information that leads a person to form a reasonable belief that an employee has engaged in reportable conduct or misconduct that may involve reportable conduct, whether or not the conduct or misconduct is alleged to have occurred within the course of the person's employment.

Reportable Conduct Scheme created under the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic.), the Scheme requires schools to notify the Social Services Regulator (SSR) if an allegation of reportable conduct (a reportable allegation) is made against one of their employees or other covered workers or volunteers. Employees, covered workers and volunteers can include a principal, teacher, board or school council member, contractor, volunteer, school doctor/nurse/medical professional, allied health staff member, or a minister of religion or religious leader.

School environment is any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school for use by a child or young person during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the school
- online school environments
- locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events.

Serious emotional or psychological harm Serious emotional or psychological abuse may occur when a child is repeatedly rejected, isolated or frightened by threats or the witnessing of family violence. It also includes hostility, derogatory name-calling and put-downs, or persistent coldness from a person, to the extent where the behaviour of the child is disturbed or their emotional development is at serious risk of being impaired. Serious emotional or psychological harm could also result from conduct that exploits a child without necessarily being criminal, such as encouraging a child to engage in inappropriate or risky behaviours.

Serious neglect includes a failure to provide a child with an adequate standard of nutrition, medical care, clothing, shelter or supervision. Significant neglect causes harm to a child that is more than trivial or temporary. Serious neglect is when the child is exposed to an extremely dangerous or life-threatening situation and there is a continued failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life

Sexual offences occur when a person involves a child in sexual activity, or deliberately puts the child in the presence of sexual behaviours that are exploitative or inappropriate to the child's age and development. Sexual offences are governed by the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.). Sexual abuse can involve a wide range of sexual activity and may include fondling, masturbation, oral sex, penetration, voyeurism and exhibitionism. It can also include exploitation through pornography or prostitution.

Student refers to a child or young person enrolled at OLSH College Bentleigh.

Student-to-Student Abuse and Harmful Sexual Behaviour. Refers to abuse perpetrated by one student against another student, including sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour.

Harmful sexual behaviour includes behaviour that is developmentally inappropriate, may cause harm to the child or others, or may constitute a sexual offence.

Related College Policies

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Child Protection Reporting Responsibilities Policy
- Complaints Resolution Policy
- Cyber Safety Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Respectful Relationships Policy
- Bullying Prevention Policy

Related documents

- PROTECT Identifying and Responding to Child Abuse in Victorian Schools
- PROTECT – Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse
- PROTECT - Responding to offences under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic)
- PROTECT – Student-to-Student Abuse and Harmful Sexual Behaviour Guidance
- Reportable Conduct Scheme Guidance (Social Services Regulator)

References

- State of Victoria, Child Safe Standards - Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises, Ministerial Order No.1359

Code History and Review

At OLSH College, we are committed to continuous improvement of our child safety systems and practices. We intend this Code of Conduct to be a dynamic document that will be regularly reviewed to ensure it is working in practice and updated to accommodate changes in legislation or circumstance.

Approved by	OLSH College Board
Person(s) Responsible	OLSH College Principal
Date(s) Reviewed or Updated	July 2022, July 2026
Next Review Date	July 2028

Child Safety Code of Conduct Agreement

I acknowledge that I have received, read and understood this Code of Conduct and I agree to adhere to its standards and expectations. I understand that any violation of the Code shall result in my being subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

Name			
Role/position			
Signature		Date	

NOTE – OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

Copy of this Code of Conduct to be provided to all OLSH College staff and personnel
Original signed copy of this Code and agreement to be retained by the College; copy to be provided to staff members and personnel.