



Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct

(inclusive of Online learning options stemming from COVID-19)

Rationale:

Central to the mission of St Thomas' Primary School 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.

Purpose

This Code of Conduct has a specific focus on safeguarding children and young people at St. Thomas' Primary School against behaviour inclusive of online behaviour which places them at risk. This code of conduct also provides protection to staff to ensure that they maintain professional relationships at all times, inclusive of an online environment.

This Code of Conduct has a specific focus on safeguarding children and young people at St. Thomas' Primary School against sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse or neglect and is inclusive of online learning environments.

This Code is intended to complement other professional and/or occupational codes.

All staff, volunteers, external providers and contractors, clergy and school advisory council members at St. Thomas' Primary School are expected to contribute actively 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 (inclusive of online behaviour) towards and in the company of children, as noted below.

Acceptable Behaviours

All staff, volunteers, contractors, visitors, clergy and school advisory council members are responsible for supporting the safety of children in all environments, including an online learning environment by:

- adhering to the school's child safe policy and upholding the school's statement of commitment to child safety at all times, including in an online environment.
- 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 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 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 of 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, including in an online environment.

- reporting any allegations of child abuse to a member of the school's leadership or to the child safety officer
- 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 to the child safety officer
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe

Unacceptable behaviours

All staff, volunteers, contractors, clergy and school council members 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 or preferential access to staff time in an online learning environment)
- 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 or interacting with students in an unsupervised or one to one online live environment)
- 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 or online activities)
- use inappropriate language (including inappropriate online language) in the presence of children
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence (face to face or online) of children
- discriminate against any child, including because of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or disability
- without a valid context have contact with a child or their family outside of school (face to face or virtual) without the school's leadership or child safety officer's knowledge and/or consent or the school governing authority's approval (for example, unauthorised after hours tutoring, private instrumental/other lessons or sports coaching). Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street or at community events, is appropriate. *Principal may accept this if the purpose is for setting the student up for remote and flexible learning.
- without a valid context have any online contact with a child or their family (including by social media, email, instant messaging etc) unless via a school approved online learning system for the purpose of learning or their family or (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 when communicating with children or their families unless sanctioned by the school leadership
- exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking sites or email addresses unless directly relevant and necessary for assistance with school related work
- photograph or video a child without the consent of the parent or guardians (other than the recording for the purpose of online learning systems which are to be stored on a school approved platform or school owned server, which should be communicated to parents) * The Principal will determine which medium will be used for this.
- work with children whilst under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs (face to face or online)
- consume alcohol or drugs at school or at school events in the presence of children (face to face or online) (exceptions to this would include the consumption of alcohol at staff drinks, or any other event sanctioned by the School Principal or School Advisory Council)

Practically, the community of St. Thomas's Primary School, Terang is such that many staff are also parents and their children will interact with St. Thomas' staff in a variety of contexts outside of school, some of which will include online communication. St. Thomas' staff and volunteers must therefore keep in mind the trusted position that they and St. Thomas' Primary School hold in the community.

Breaches of the Code of Conduct:

The following protocol is to be followed if a St. Thomas' Primary School staff member, volunteer, parent or School Advisory Council member needs to report an allegation of child abuse or possible breach of the school's Code of Conduct;

1. If the breach is by staff or volunteers, the report should be made to the Principal or the Child Safety Officer.
2. If the breach is by the Principal, the report should be made to either/ both of the school's Governing Authority or to the Director of Catholic Education Ballarat.
3. If the breach is by the Governing Authority, the report should be made to the Bishop of Ballarat or his Vicar General as per the Diocesan Code of Conduct (this can be found on the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat website under Professional Standards)

Attestation

I, _____, confirm I have been provided with a copy of the above Code of Conduct.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

CEOB: Version: 7 April 2020

St. Thomas' School has developed this policy in accordance with Ministerial Order No. 870
(Adapted from Source: VRQA)