

# Safe Guarding Children & Young People Code of Conduct

## Introduction:

Central to the mission of St Thomas the Apostle 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 the Apostle Primary School against sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse or neglect. It is intended to complement other professional and/or occupational codes.

All staff, volunteers, contractors, clergy and school board members at St Thomas the Apostle Primary 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 noted below.

## Acceptable Behaviours:

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

- Adhering to the school's child safe policy 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. This includes 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.
- Reporting any allegations of child abuse to the school's leadership.
- Understanding and complying with all reporting obligations as they relate to mandatory reporting and reporting under the Crimes Act 1958.
- Reporting any child safety concerns to the school's leadership.
- If an allegation of child abuse is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe.

## Unacceptable Behaviours:

Staff, volunteers and contractors 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 or being alone with a child with no clear line of sight to others).
- 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, religion, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or disability.
- Have contact with a child or their family outside of school without the school's leadership 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 and with the knowledge and/or consent of school leadership e.g. 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 guardians.
- Work with children whilst under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Consume alcohol or drugs at school events in the presence of children.

(Adapted from Source: VRQA)

- Where an employee is suspected of breaching this Code of Conduct, St Thomas the Apostle Primary School may start proceedings under clause 13 of the Victorian Catholic Education Multi Enterprise Agreement 2013 (VCMEA) for managing employment concerns. This may result in disciplinary consequences.
- Where a volunteer or contractor is found to have breached this Code of Conduct, their work association with St Thomas the Apostle Primary School may be terminated.