



PENLEIGH AND ESSENDON GRAMMAR SCHOOL

## **Code of conduct for staff and others who interact with students**

### **Introduction**

With the endorsement of the Board of Directors, Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School is committed to supporting a culture of safety, trust and respect. The school has a policy of zero tolerance for child abuse. It has an obligation to ensure that all staff members, volunteers and others interacting with students are aware of their responsibilities and register their intention to adhere to this code of conduct.

The Board of Directors ensures that the school periodically reviews the effectiveness of the strategies put into practice and, if considered appropriate, revises those strategies.

The school encourages an environment in which relationships are responsive and respectful and in which students' sense of security and belonging is promoted. The following code addresses the responsibilities of school staff and others who interact with children to comply with requirements set out in *Ministerial Order No 870 – Child Safety Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools* and with the reportable conduct scheme administered by the Commission for Children and Young People, Victoria (CCYP), which establish minimum standards for maintaining child-safe environments. The school also has obligations under the *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)* together with the *Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014 (Vic)* which require adults to report suspected incidences of child abuse and to protect children under the age of 16 years from sexual abuse, including actions of grooming for sexual conduct.

The offence of grooming for sexual conduct targets predatory conduct undertaken to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time. Grooming can be conducted in person or online, for example via social media, web forums and emails. It may also consist of communication with another person having care, supervision or authority over the young person who is the intended victim of the sexual offence. Grooming does not necessarily involve any sexual activity or even discussion of sexual activity but the offender has the intention of engaging in sexual activity at a later date. Under the *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)* and the *Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014 (Vic)* it is not necessary for the grooming conduct to occur in Victoria, so long as the perpetrator intended that the sexual offence would occur in Victoria. (Refer to Policy for a Child Safe School)

Any member of the school community aged 18 or over who becomes aware of grooming behaviour conducted by a person aged 18 or over should notify the Principal and/or the police immediately. The Principal will act to protect the child including by reduction or removal of the risk.

This code of conduct should be read in conjunction with the following school policies: Policy for a Child Safe School and Policy for Protection of Children and Managing the Risk of Child Abuse.

All staff, volunteers and others interacting with children within the school community are urged to use positive language and acknowledge and model respectful behaviour in all communications by following the school's Statement of Our Behaviour and Mutual Respect Policy.

Breach of this code may result in disciplinary action, including termination of employment or cessation of engagement with the school. Depending on the circumstances, the school may also refer the matter to the police.

Our Privacy Policy sets out the manner in which we collect, use, disclose and manage personal information and should be consulted with reference to your agreement as set out below.

## **Code of Conduct**

All staff, volunteers and others interacting with children at the school are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as noted below. Teachers and other mandated professionals are reminded of their additional reporting obligations in the event of suspected physical or sexual abuse of a child.

All staff, volunteers and others interacting with children within the PEGS community are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:

- adhering to Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School's Policy for a Child Safe School at all times;
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse;
- treating everyone with respect;
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are reporting that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another;
- promoting a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal children and encouraging their participation and empowerment in school life (refer to the Australian Indigenous Populations and Affairs Policy);
- promoting the participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and children identifying as gender diverse, by having zero tolerance of discrimination (refer to the Mutual Respect Policy and Gender Inclusion Policy);
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability, and those experiencing difficult family circumstances;
- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not left alone with a student unless authorised;
- reporting any allegations of child abuse to the Principal, Vice Principal or Head of Section and ensuring any allegation is reported to the police or child protection;
- reporting any child safety concerns to the Principal, Vice Principal or Head of Section;
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe;
- encouraging children to 'have a say' and providing opportunities for students to participate on issues that are important to them.

**To support child safety the following behaviours must be adopted by all staff, volunteers, and others interacting with children.**

### **1. In their actions:**

- do not use physical contact to punish or discipline a student;
- in a situation where physical restraint of a child is considered necessary that it occur for the minimum duration until the danger has passed;
- encourage equality in relationships with children so that favouritism is avoided (for example, avoid the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children);
- do not use behaviours which children would construe as unnecessarily physical. It is recognised that close physical contact may sometimes be necessary, for example when demonstrating gymnastic skills, music or dance moves and other physical activities but the student's permission should always be sought prior to instruction. Close physical contact may be appropriate with young children, for example, when consoling an upset child, but such actions would not be appropriate with older children;
- protect children from the risk of abuse in the school environment, for example, by keeping the door open and/or remaining clearly in view during individual interactions. This includes while students are on camps, excursions, study tours or any other school authorised activity either on school property or elsewhere. Exceptions exist for staff in professional or operational roles where an open door policy would be inappropriate for the interaction being undertaken, for example, providing personal care for students with individual needs or during one-to-one communication by a counsellor or psychologist with a student/client.
- except where care of a student's special needs require, avoid doing things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves.

### **2. In their conversations and correspondence via any medium:**

- use appropriate language in the presence of children;
- avoid pet names;
- do not have discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children, make jokes or innuendos of a sexual nature;
- do not use or condone obscene gestures or pornographic material;
- do not permit access to sexually explicit material which is not part of the endorsed curriculum;
- avoid expressing personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children;
- be alert to risks of discrimination against any child, including because of disability, culture, race, ethnicity, sexuality or gender preference.

### **3. Outside the school, including telephone, online and social media connections:**

- ensure online contact with a child or their family is for educational purposes and by using the school's authorised IT system, unless with the permission of the child's parent or guardian;
- ensure telephone contact with a child or their family is for educational purposes, unless with the permission of the child's parent or guardian;
- ensure all other contact with a child outside of school occurs only with the permission of the child's parent or guardian;
- any photographic images of students are taken only for designated school purposes. Such images should not be stored on a personal device but must be transferred to a school file within seven days as specified in the Photography Protocol Policy and deleted from a personal device;

- do not publish or upload photographic or audio material of a student to any location without the consent of the student's parent and the school.

**Note that exceptions to portions of this code may occur where other professional or occupational codes of conduct that regulate staff members would be breached by adherence to that aspect.**

**Report any suspected or disclosed child abuse.**

*If you believe this code has been breached it is your responsibility to report immediately to Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School's Principal.*

*If you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse phone 000.*

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I have read this Code of Conduct:

Name: .....

Signature: .....

Date: .....