



PENLEIGH AND ESSENDON GRAMMAR SCHOOL

If you require access to this policy in a language other than English, please contact the Principal's office on 9016 2000

Policy for Positive Interactions of Staff and Students

Introduction

Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School encourages an environment in which each student is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships with other students and adults. Confirming its obligation to zero tolerance for child abuse, and an environment where inappropriate behaviours, including physical, sexual and psychological abuse, bullying, harassment, discrimination and violence are unacceptable, the school is committed to the development and maintenance of respectful and equitable relationships between members of the school community. This undertaking applies to interactions of staff, contractors, and volunteers with students and between students

Scope

The policy is formulated with reference to **Ministerial Order No 1359 – Implementing the Child Safety Standards - Managing the risk of child abuse in schools and school boarding premises** and the Reportable Conduct Scheme administered by the Commission for Children and Young People, Victoria (CCYP). It should be read in conjunction with the **Procedures for Protection of Children** which addresses mandatory reporting by teachers and certain other professionals of suspected cases of physical and sexual abuse, failure to protect a student from harm as well as community obligations related to sexual abuse: both protection of a student from sexual abuse or sexual grooming activities and disclosure of incidents. Attention is also drawn to the school's **Code of Conduct** for Staff and Others Interacting with Students, to which all staff are required to adhere, and the **Policy of Mutual Respect and Behaviour Management** which describes expectations for interpersonal behaviour and the school's responses to negative behaviour by students.

This policy relates to all students at the school from Kindergarten through Year Twelve and refers to professional conduct of all staff. All students can engage with educators in meaningful, open interactions that support the acquisition of skills for life and learning.

In accordance with standards published by Australian Students' Education and Care Quality Authority (2011) interactions of staff, contractors and volunteers with students are to be warm and responsive and build trusting relationships. Each student will be supported to feel secure, confident and included. Each student will be supported to work with, learn from and help others through collaborative learning opportunities. Each student will be supported to manage their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts. The dignity and rights of every student will be maintained at all times.

The school acknowledges the diverse backgrounds which exist within its student population. Staff members are required to be respectful of cultural, linguistic and personal differences and to remain alert to the possibility that psychological and emotional harm, with the added potential for child abuse, may be the unintentional consequence of a failure to consider such

differences. Factors for special consideration include race, religion, ethnic or linguistic background, diversity related to sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status (LGBTQI+), individual needs related to disability and situations in which a student may be unable to live at home or may be experiencing other difficult family circumstances. Victoria's Child Safe Standards direct specific attention to respecting, valuing and protecting children of First Nations Australians' heritage and acknowledging the importance of culture to their safety and wellbeing.

Professional conduct

While Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School encourages relationships between staff and students that are supportive and caring, a clear understanding by students that staff members are professionals is fostered and whilst staff members can be interested, kind and friendly, they should not be, nor act like, friends or equals of any student.

In general terms, physical contact between staff members and students is discouraged and 'hands off' practices are recommended. Corporal punishment is forbidden and physical contact with students must not be made to punish or discipline. Any contact with a student that is prolonged or effusive or may be perceived to be of a sexual or intimate nature, such as touching on the buttocks, genitals or breasts, should be strictly avoided.

All interaction must be positive and respectful. The school acknowledges the complexities and variations in relationships and behaviours staff members may have with students from Kindergarten to Year Twelve. In general when interacting with secondary age students, staff members should not have physical contact with the students in their care unless deemed necessary when demonstrating sport, musical, dance or drama postures, or for the provision of medical care such as first aid and then, only with the consent of the student. The school recognises that interactions between a staff member and primary age students may include greater physical contact and direct support than would be appropriate with older students. Notwithstanding these differences, it is acknowledged that a pat on the arm or shoulder to console, support or encourage a student might be appropriate from time to time when dealing with a student at any age.

Significant physical contact may be required when supporting a student with special needs. In these situations, the support should always concur with strategies agreed in consultation with the student and their parents and follow plans documented in the student's Individual Education Plan or Student Health Support Plan.

All communication, including that conducted online, between staff members and students should be handled in a professional manner. Staff members should not connect with students, or interact with or post images of students on their own private social media forums, for example, do not 'friend' a student on Facebook or upload images of students to Instagram. Refer to the **Social Media Policy**.

Restraint of a student

There are situations where a staff member may reasonably restrain a student who is an immediate danger to themselves or others. Action taken should be age appropriate and considered reasonable in the circumstances. There should be no other immediately evident and less restrictive means of responding to the situation and the action taken for the minimum time until the danger has passed. Whilst no staff member is expected to place themselves in danger, they are expected to exercise professional judgement in responding appropriately to situations, considering the circumstances and their own physical capacity and abilities.

Following restraint of a student, support may be required by the student and others, both students and staff members, who were involved or witnessed the incident. Such support

will be offered as appropriate. Communication with the student's parents will occur as appropriate, and will include discussion of decisions addressing the student's wellbeing and needs with reference to the **Policy of Mutual Respect and Behaviour Management** and the **Individual Needs Policy** when fitting. An incident report will be prepared for the Principal and a record kept when follow-up actions or support are required.

After hours contact

Staff members might attend an after-hours function such as a private party or be present at a public venue where PEGS students are present. If the staff member decides that a student may be at risk of harm, they should take reasonable measures to reduce that risk. The staff member must then inform the Head of Section at the earliest opportunity of the risk and their response.

Strategies to reduce the risk of child abuse and promote child empowerment

The Board of Directors endorses a caring, respectful and inclusive culture based on the **Policy of Mutual Respect and Behaviour Management** and **Statement of Our Behaviour**. Discussion of behavioural expectations will be held regularly with students at every level and information summarising policies displayed widely in classrooms for reference by staff and students.

In recognition of the potential for abusive situations, the Heads of Section will employ risk management strategies in monitoring the school environment and activities in which a staff member is alone with children. This may include consideration of the potential for abuse associated with circumstances of the physical environment, including risk related to the layout of school buildings and grounds; the appropriate use of the electronic environment, including social networks, and the potential for risk during co-curricular activities. Refer to the **Code of Conduct** for Staff and others interacting with students and the **Social Media Policy**.

The school will also protect children from potential abuse by requiring that a valid Working With Children Check (WWCC) is provided for all staff employed by an external agency but working on school property on a regular basis or for an extended period, as well as personnel involved in student-related activities during an excursion, study tour, student exchange placement or other activity organized by the school. Where it is necessary for short-term work to be carried out on school property by a worker not holding a valid WWCC, they will be accompanied by a suitable registered supervisor while on school property. **Refer to the Visitors Policy**.

In consultation with Heads of Section the Principal will ensure that appropriate guidance will be provided to school staff at least annually about:

- individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for managing the risk of child abuse, including risks related to the actions of students 18 years or over in communication with students of less than 16 years;
- response to and management of risks related to abuse by one student of another;
- review of potential risk for child abuse in the school environment, including in online communication;
- the school's current child safety standards and Code of Conduct for Staff and Others Interacting with Students.

Refer to the Child Safety Policy.

A **Student Safety Officer** will be appointed within each Section or Department of the school, reporting to the Head of Section. The Student Safety Officer will work to embed a culture of child safety in the school by working across operations, curriculum and communications. In their role they will:

- complete any additional specialised training offered by the school to support their role with respect to child safety;
- work with Senior Staff to reduce the risk of child abuse;
- support children's understanding of their rights, safety and available;
- support child empowerment and participation in development of a child safe school environment;
- assist the Head of Section to fulfil annual child safety audit requirements.

Associated policies

- Child Safety Policy
- Code of Conduct for staff and others interacting with students
- First Nations Australians Policy
- Individual Needs Policy
- Policy of Mutual Respect and Behaviour Management
- Procedures for Protection of Children
- Social Media Policy
- Statement of Our Behaviour

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