



Child Safety Code of Conduct

October 2016

Mount Alexander College is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Our school community recognises the importance of, and has a responsibility for, ensuring our school is a safe, supportive and enriching environment which respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of children and young people, and enables them to thrive in their learning and development.

This Code of Conduct aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur. It also assists in understanding how to avoid or better manage risky behaviours and situations. It is intended to complement child protection legislation, Department of Education and Training (DET) policy, school policies and procedures and professional standards, and codes or ethics as these apply to staff and other personnel.

Under the School Council the Principal will:

- be responsible for the overall welfare and wellbeing of staff and volunteers;
- be accountable for managing and maintaining a duty of care towards staff and volunteers; and
- nominate Mount Alexander College's Student Wellbeing Leader as the Child Protection Officer. The Child Protection Officer will provide information and support to all staff, volunteers, children, young people and their carers regarding child protection matters.

The Principal and school leaders of Mount Alexander College will support implementation and monitoring of the Code of Conduct, and will plan, implement and monitor arrangements to provide inclusive, safe and orderly schools and other learning environments. The Principal and school leaders of Mount Alexander College will also provide information and support to enable the Code of Conduct to operate effectively.

All staff, contractors, volunteers, International Student Program (ISP) Homestay family members and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work are required to comply with the Code of Conduct by observing the expectations for appropriate behaviour detailed below.

The Code of Conduct applies in all school situations, including any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the School Council for use by a child during or outside school hours. (i.e. including school camps and in the use of digital technology and social media).

The Code of Conduct is to be read in conjunction with the related policies listed below including the Mount Alexander College Child Protection Policy.

For definitions in relation to Ministerial Order No. 870 on which this Code of Conduct is based, see **Appendix 1.**

In recognition of the diverse cultural and linguistic needs represented within the Mount Alexander College community, the Child Safety Code of Conduct will also be provided in Persian, Dinka, Amharic, Oromo, Somali, Turkish, Tigrigna, Mandarin and in Vietnamese and in other languages as requested. Given the high illiteracy rates among our families, this policy will also be discussed routinely at the regular MAC oral communications meeting through interpreters in languages including those specified above.

All school councillors, DET employees, volunteers, ISP Homestay family members and contractors are strongly encouraged to sign the Mount Alexander College Child Safety Code of Conduct Agreement. See **Appendix 2.**

Acceptable behaviours

All people involved in child-related work on behalf of Mount Alexander College will take individual responsibility for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

- upholding the school's statement of commitment to child safety and at all times, and adhering to the Mount Alexander College Child Protection Policy
- carrying out all duty of care obligations
- operating within the policies and guidelines of Mount Alexander College
- treating students and families in the school community with respect both within the school environment and outside the school environment as part of normal social and community activities
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety or the safety of another child
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability
- reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to the principal and/or Child Protection Officer
- understanding and complying with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) as they relate to protecting children from harm or abuse
- contacting Victoria Police if a child is at immediate risk of abuse – dial 000
- if child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm
- being professional, fair, considerate and honest with others
- complying with specific college guidelines on physical contact with children. See **Appendix 3**.
- respecting the privacy of children, their families and teachers/carers, and only disclosing information to people who have a need to know.

Unacceptable behaviours

All people involved in child-related work on behalf of Mount Alexander College must not:

- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse
- develop relations with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming' behaviour (for example, offering gifts)
- exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with students which may be interpreted as abusive and not justified by the educational, therapeutic, or service delivery context
- ignore behaviours of 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 a therapeutic setting
- treat a child unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, religion, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity
- shame, humiliate, oppress, belittle or degrade children or young people
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children or young people
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person, or do things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves
- be alone with a child or young person unnecessarily and for more than a very short time
- communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc.) except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to school work or extra-curricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter

- photographing or videoing a child in a school environment except in accordance with school policy or where required for duty of care purposes¹
- in the school environment or at other school events where students are present, consume alcohol contrary to school policy² or take illicit drugs under any circumstances.

¹ SPAG: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/photoandfilm.aspx> . The policy says the school should get consent before taking and publishing photos of a student. This applies every time a photo is taken. The same policy applies for excursions and school activities.

¹ SPAG: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/alcohol.aspx>. The policy says the school must obtain school council approval before alcohol can be consumed on school grounds or at a school activity. The policy says staff members should not consume alcohol during camps and excursions. It is silent on whether they can consume alcohol at other school events where students are present, this is a matter that the school needs to decide upon – draft text is provided in the guidance fact sheet

What happens if you breach this Code of Conduct

If DET employees breach this Code of Conduct they will face disciplinary action in line with the Department’s Guidelines for Managing Complaints, Misconduct and Unsatisfactory Performance - Teaching Service.

www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/workm/Pages/conduct.aspx

Volunteers and contractors will face termination of contract or cessation of engagement with the college.

Related Policies and Links:

- Child Protection Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Supervision and Duty of Care
- Bullying and Harassment
- ICT Acceptable Use
- Mandatory Reporting
- Student Safety
- Student Behaviour
- Student Engagement and Inclusion
- Privacy
- Staff Recruitment
- Staff Induction
- Working With Children Check
- Cultural and Social Diversity
- Visitors
- Photographing and Filming Students
- Camps, Tours, Excursions, Incursions and Outdoor Activities
- Employee and Volunteers Social Media

www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafes

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/Pages/childsafes.aspx>

Evaluation:

This Code of Conduct will be reviewed bi annually or if legislation or other changes are required in the interim.

Key Reviewer	Date Ratified	Next Review
Principal	2016	2018

Signatures

Wayne Haworth
Principal

School Council President

Appendix 1

Definitions: Ministerial Order No. 870

Child abuse includes:

- any act committed against a child involving
 - a sexual offence or
 - an offence under section 49B(2) of the *Crimes Act 1958* (grooming)
- the infliction, on a child, of
 - physical violence or
 - serious emotional or psychological harm
- serious neglect of a child.

Child means a child enrolled as a student at the school

Child-connected work means work authorised by the School Council and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

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

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

- a campus of the school
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems)
- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events).

School staff means an individual working in a school environment who is:

- employed under Part 2.4 of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (ETR Act) in the government teaching service or
- employed under a contract of service by the council of the school under Part 2.3 of the ETR Act or
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary).

Appendix 2

**Mount Alexander College
Child Safety Code of Conduct Agreement**

I have read and understood the Mount Alexander College Child Safety Code of Conduct and agree to adhere to it.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 3

Guidelines on Physical Contact with Students

All Mount Alexander College DET employees, volunteers, visitors and contractors need to be aware of the following good practice with students:

- when touch is required, ask the student's permission to touch and explain what form it will take
- avoid being in a one-to-one situation with a student where possible
- never assume that physical contact is acceptable to a student
- respect the signs that a student is uncomfortable with touch
- use verbal directions rather than touch, for example, when directing students to an area
- use the above approach with activities such as dance, sport, music or drama
- make sure the physical contact is appropriate to the activity
- students must not be left in a distressed state for long periods. Parents need to be contacted.

Cultural Protocols and Appropriate Physical Contact

All Mount Alexander College DET employees, volunteers, visitors and contractors need to be aware that:

- some cultures and religions disapprove of physical contact between adults and children, especially if the adult is a male and the child is female
- some students from other cultures may have backgrounds of severe trauma
- it is usual for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to touch an adult to communicate a need rather than to express it verbally
- some cultures including Aboriginal and Polynesian children prefer not to make direct eye contact.

Use of physical contact for the purposes of health and safety at the college

DET employees may make legitimate use of physical restraint if all non-physical interventions have been used unsuccessfully and as a last resort in the following situations:

- A student or adult's safety is threatened
- A student is attacking another student
- A student is posing an immediate danger to themselves or others
- It is the teacher's duty of care to protect students from risks of injury

Teachers need to keep talking to the student throughout the incident.

If it is necessary to physically restrain a child for safety reasons, grip clothing rather than the body wherever possible.

Inappropriate Physical Contact

All DET employees, volunteers and contractors are prohibited from:

- using any form of corporal punishment/physical discipline. This includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, tapping, poking or any other physical force as retaliation or correction
- massaging a student or having a student massage them
- touching the groin, genital area, buttocks, breasts or any other part of the body that may cause distress or embarrassment
- initiating, permitting or requesting contact including kissing, tickling, hand holding
- inappropriate use of physical restraint including:
 - force applied to the head or neck
 - restrictions to breathing
 - punching or kicking
 - holding by the hair or ear

- confining a student in a locked room or limited space
- any physical contact in a private area of the college, or in one-on-one situations on camps, tours or excursions.

Appropriate Physical Contact

- **Sport and Physical Education**

Touching students is a natural part of coaching and instructing in sport. This is an important and necessary aspect of safe and effective teaching especially in activities such as gymnastics and demonstrating a range of games skills.

In line with a teachers' duty of care and the community's view of acceptable standards of appropriate behaviour and physical activity, teachers will only make physical contact if the aim is to:

- develop sports skills or techniques
- treat or prevent an injury
- meet the requirements of the sport.

Teachers will:

- explain what the touching will be and ask for volunteers, or ask students if they mind a hands-on demonstration approach
- explain when spotting is required in programs such as gymnastics
- be explicit about where contact will be made, for example, around the waist or hips
- be explicit about the fact that if students need 'catching' for safety reasons, touching may not proceed as planned, to ensure their safety
- give students verbal instructions first and only follow up with a demonstration if the student permits it. (Such as in throwing a javelin or ball).
- minimise the need for touching.

- **Other Circumstances**

With the permission of the student, and with prior explanation of the touching, physical contact may occur in the course of:

- music, drama or dance demonstrations
- administering first aid
- Physical contact is acceptable in a non-intrusive form such as:
 - shaking hands or a pat on the back or upper arm when congratulating a child. Positive reinforcement with encouraging words should accompany this.
 - a hand on the upper arm or upper back to comfort a student who is experiencing grief and loss or distress.

Appropriate Physical Contact with Children with Additional Needs or Disabilities

Students with diagnosed conditions may engage in a much wider range of physical behaviours towards DET employees and other students as a result of their condition. Staff may need to engage in more physical contact as a means to their duty of care.

Staff may need to:

- be more thoughtful about their physical contact with children with additional needs and disabilities
- be aware that these children have an increased reliance on staff to keep them safe
- involve specialised staff to set up education plans to provide strategies to support the child and minimise the need for physical contact
- ensure children with Asperger's have facts; a list of do's and don'ts in relation to appropriate touching
- assist with the toileting and personal care needs. An individual plan for these needs must have been

negotiated with parents.

Supervision of Change Rooms On and Off Site

Teachers have a duty of care, which includes the supervision of change rooms on and off site.

Teachers will:

- develop and give explicit rules about behaviour in the change room
- set a routine for going into change rooms and keep to it
- as a rule, stand at the door with their back to students. Student privacy will be respected.
- let students know when entering with the request that they cover up.

There are particular community sensitivities around male/female teacher supervision of the opposite gender students in change rooms.

Where this is absolutely necessary, teachers will:

- make sure that students know you will need to enter the change room if there is an emergency following a warning and advice to cover up
 - choose two student representatives to report any problems in the change rooms
 - call all students out if there is any disturbance
 - ask a same sex teacher to enter the change room if students remain inside.
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