



## **SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

### **Mercy Regional College Code of Conduct**

**July 2016**

#### **RATIONALE:**

Central to the mission of Mercy Regional College is an unequivocal commitment to fostering the dignity, self-esteem and integrity of children and young people. We are committed to providing them with a safe, supportive and enriching environment that supports and encourages holistic education - allowing young people to develop academically, spiritually, physically, emotionally and socially.

#### **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:**

This Code of Conduct has a specific focus on safeguarding children and young people at Mercy Regional College against sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse or neglect. It is intended to complement other professional and/or occupational codes including the VIT Code of Conduct, the Victorian Catholic Education MEA and the College's standard staff employment contract.

All staff, volunteers, contractors, clergy and board members at Mercy Regional College 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 detailed below.

#### **Acceptable behaviours**

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

- adhering to Mercy Regional College's child-safe policy and upholding the college's statement of commitment to child safety at all times
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- treating everyone in the Mercy Regional College 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 have 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 policy towards 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 unless privacy or confidentiality necessitates this
- reporting any allegations of child abuse to the school's leadership or child safety officer. If the allegations concern a member of the College's leadership team or clergy, specific reporting protocols are in place. These can be found on the College's website under MRC Child Safety Standards
- understanding and complying with all reporting obligations as they relate to mandatory reporting and reporting under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.)
- 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 board 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)
- exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example, inappropriate embraces or touching of hair)
- put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors). Where privacy is necessary for discussions between staff and students, staff should use offices or rooms with clear sight-lines in or ask a witness to be present
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with 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, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or disability
- have contact with a child or their family **in regards to school related matters** outside of school 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 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 for school related matters**. (For example, College newsletters/parent communications or when assisting students with their school work)
- use any personal communication channels/device such as a personal email account when communication with children
- exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking sites or email addresses unless directly relevant and necessary for assistance with school work
- photograph or video a child without the consent of the parent or guardians
- work with children while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs

- consume alcohol or drugs at school or at school events in the presence of children.  
(Exception to this include the College's Year 12 Graduation dinner, Staff weekly drinks, Parish Carols' Night or any other event sanctioned by the College Principal)

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

### **BREACHES OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT:**

The following protocol is to be followed if a Mercy Regional College staff member, volunteer, parent or board member needs to report an allegation of child abuse or possible breach of the College'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 College's Canonical Administrators or to the Director of Catholic Education Ballarat
3. If the breach is by a Canonical Administrator, 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)

### **Staff Attestation**

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

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_