

CHILD SAFE STANDARD 3: CODE OF CONDUCT

Child Safety Code of Conduct January 2024

Monash Children's Hospital School (MCHS) is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Our school community recognises the importance of, and 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 policy, school policies and procedures and professional standards, codes or ethics as these apply to staff and other personnel.

The Principal and school leaders of MCHS 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 MCHS will also provide information and support to enable the Code of Conduct to operate effectively.

All staff, contractors, volunteers and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work are required to comply with the Code of Conduct by observing expectations for appropriate behaviour below. The Code of Conduct applies in all school situations, including school camps and in the use of digital technology and social media.

Acceptable behaviours

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work individually, we are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

- upholding the school's statement of commitment to child safety at all times.

Monash Children's Hospital School is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision-making. **The school has zero tolerance for child abuse.** The school is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to cultural safety of Aboriginal children, young children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability or significant health condition.

Every person involved in the school has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role s/he plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

In its planning, decision making and operations Monash Children's Hospital School will:

- take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety;
- value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;

- foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children. This will be supported by all staff understanding their child safety role, being mindful of and building respectful and safe relationships between children and their teachers and other school staff;
 - respect diversity in cultures and child rearing while keeping child safety paramount;
 - provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children;
 - engage only the most suitable people to work with children and high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development;
 - ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise issues. Our school is structured around health conditions and will be based on the various paediatric wards and or mental health units and so all children will be able to forge respectful relationships in their paediatric wards/mental health units/day treatment units with multiple teachers thereby giving them opportunities to seek support from a number of significant others in their immediate day to day learning environment.
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- 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/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 school's leadership [Include <or child safety officer's> if school has assigned someone to this role]
 - understanding and complying with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) as they relate to protecting children from harm or abuse.
 - if child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm.

Unacceptable behaviours

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work we must not:

- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse
- develop a relationship 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 by 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, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity.
- 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

- photograph or video 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.

This Code of Conduct will be presented to School Council in February 2024 and will be reviewed annually. The next Review date is February 2026.

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.

² 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