Mount Martha Primary School Child Safety Standards Policies

Mount Martha Primary School Child Safe Environment Policy

Rationale

Every government school has a responsibility to ensure a safe environment for its children. The Child Safe Environments Policy sets out our school’s approach to creating a child safe organisation where children and young people are safe and feel safe and provides the policy framework for the school’s approach to the Child Safe Standards.

Aims

For all staff, volunteers, contractors and whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people to be aware of and adhere to this policy to create and maintain a child safe organisation.

To apply this policy across a broad range of school forums (e.g. camps, online) and outside of school hours and provide a framework for our approach to the school’s Child Safety Standards.

Implementation

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Mount Martha Primary 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, with particular attention paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability and vulnerable children.

Mount Martha Primary School has zero tolerance for child abuse and 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.

Every person involved in Mount Martha Primary School has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/she 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, Mount Martha Primary School will

1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety
2. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives
3. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children
4. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount
5. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children
6. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development
7. Ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise such issues
8. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities
9. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk
10. Value the input of families and carers and correspond with them regularly.

Actions the school will take:

Mount Martha Primary School will demonstrate its commitment to child safety and monitor the school’s adherence to its child safety policy on an annual basis through sharing the policy with staff, casual relief teachers, volunteers, school council, and the school community. In order to:

- support, encourage and enable school staff, parents, and children to understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters; and.
- support or assist children who disclose child abuse, or are otherwise linked to suspected child abuse.

Monitoring the child safe policy will be managed by:

- embedding of child safety strategies into daily school procedures,
- a commitment to child safety
- a code of conduct that establishes clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children
- screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel
- providing a clear processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
- implementing strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
- developing strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children

Supervision

- Supervision of employees and volunteers will be managed in a way that protects children from abuse and improves accountability and performance, without being onerous or heavy-handed. For instance, where practical, two staff members should be present during activities with children. In particular, children with a disability may require additional supervision.
- As a matter of good practice, new employees and volunteers should be supervised regularly to ensure they understand their role and learn skills, as well as to check that their behaviour towards children is appropriate. Any warning signs will be reported through appropriate channels, including the schools internal reporting procedures (such as school leadership), the Department of Health and Human Services (child protection), or police if a child is believed to be at imminent risk.

Performance and development review

- A proactive performance development strategies will be used to improve employees and volunteers skills and knowledge on child safety. This is also an opportunity to improve
knowledge and skills in working with children, as well as recognising and responding to suspected abuse.

**Code of conduct and mandatory reporting**

- Mount Martha Primary School will provide all staff with a code of conduct which outlines expected standards of appropriate behaviour with and in the company of children. Annually the policy and code will be reviewed by each staff member as part of the schools meeting schedule and included in induction for all staff.

- Disciplinary procedures should be used if an allegation of child abuse is not made or a breach of the code of conduct is known or suspected.

- Employees and volunteers must be aware of reporting procedures and how to communicate concerns regarding the improper behaviour of any person within the organisation. Members of the school must be aware of their duty to raise concerns about the behaviour of any person who may present a risk of child abuse, without fear of repercussions. A mandatory Reporting policy is attached.

- Children and their families should be encouraged to raise any concerns about the behaviour of any person, and can expect to be listened to and supported.

**Policies and procedures outlining Mount Martha Primary School’s approach to the Child Safe Standards are outlined below.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A child-safe culture</th>
<th>Mount Martha Primary School’s culture encourages staff to raise, discuss and scrutinise concerns making it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personnel understand their roles and responsibilities/Code of Conduct</td>
<td>School leaders and managers will ensure that each person understands their role, responsibilities and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. Staff will comply with the school’s Code of Conduct. The school’s Code of Conduct sets out clear awareness of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. Both of these documents are referred to in the Staff manual and have hyperlinks to these documents. Refer to the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Victorian Teachers Professional Codes of Conduct and Ethics <a href="http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/professional-responsibilities/conduct-and-ethics">http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/professional-responsibilities/conduct-and-ethics</a>. A copy is attached as an appendix to this document. Also all staff of Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees. <a href="http://vpsc.vic.gov.au/resources/code-of-conduct-for-employees">http://vpsc.vic.gov.au/resources/code-of-conduct-for-employees</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human resources practices and training</td>
<td>The school applies best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff, and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that it engages the most suitable and appropriate people to work with them. We will ensure that staff induction, education and training programs are a vital part of our commitment to safeguarding children and young people from abuse and neglect. All prospective staff and volunteers are required to undergo National Criminal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
History Records check and maintain a valid Working with Children Check.

**Reporting a child safety concern or complaint**

The school has clear expectations for staff and volunteers in making a report about a child or young person who may be in need of protection. Immediate action should include reporting their concerns to the DHHS Child Protection or another appropriate agency and notifying the principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns.

**Risk reduction and management**

The school believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount, and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes. The school recognises there are potential risks to children and young people and will take a risk management approach by undertaking preventative measures.

**Listening to children**

The school has developed a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that involves and communicates with children, young people and their parents/care givers. We encourage child and parent/care giver involvement and engagement that informs safe school operations and builds the capability of children and parents/care givers to understand their rights and their responsibilities.

**Confidentiality and Privacy**

Considerable importance is placed on safeguarding the confidentiality and privacy of information about particular children and their families. The collection, use and storage of information is included in school policies.

**Breaches**

Breaches of Duty of Care and Mandatory Reporting Obligations are identified in the specific policies.

**Policy evaluation and review**

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed in the context of school self-evaluation undertaken as part of the school accountability framework.

**Definitions**


*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 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 governing authority 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:
In a government school, 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)

Related policies and Documents
DET Child Wellbeing and Safety Framework

This policy was last ratified by School Council on 8th September 2016.
Code of Conduct: Child Abuse

Child abuse is unacceptable. Ensuring children’s safety is a top priority for the Victorian Government.

What is child abuse?

Child abuse includes any act committed against a child involving:

- a sexual offence
- a grooming offence; or
- the infliction on a child of physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm or serious neglect.

Our aim is to create a culture where protecting children from abuse is part of everyday thinking and practice. To strengthen existing approaches to preventing and responding to child abuse and provide for consistency in how these issues are managed. We all have a responsibility for keeping children safe.

All registered schools are required to develop strategies to embed a culture of child safety at the school. At Mount Martha Primary we will:

- embed a culture of child safety at the school
- allocate roles and responsibilities to ensure child safe practices are adhered to
- inform the school community about the strategies being employed at the school

What is organisational culture and how does it relate to child safety?

Embedding an organisational culture of child safety is critical to reducing the risk of child abuse in schools.

To successfully embed a culture of child safety, a commitment to zero tolerance of child abuse must be led by the school council. This commitment must be shared, openly and transparently, by all members of the school community, including staff (including school employees, contractors and volunteers), parents and families, visitors and child.

All staff, volunteers and council members of Mount Martha Primary School are required to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children.
All personnel of Mount Martha Primary School are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children by:

- adhering to Mount Martha Primary School’s Child Safe Environment Policy at all times / upholding Mount Martha Primary School’s statement of commitment to child safety 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 telling you that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal 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 of 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 left alone with a child
- reporting any allegations of child abuse to a member of Mount Martha Primary Schools, Principal Class team and ensure any allegation to reported to the police or child protection
- reporting any child safety concerns to a member of Mount Martha Primary Schools, Principal Class team, if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe
- encouraging children to ‘have a say’ and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.

**Staff and volunteers must not:**

- 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 sitting on laps.
- put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors)
- 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 culture, race, ethnicity or disability
• 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.
• ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.

By observing these standards you acknowledge your responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to Mount Marthe Primary School Principal Class team.

NB: These procedures are not intended to:

• prohibit or discourage school any staff from reporting an allegation of child abuse to a person external to the school;
• state or imply that it is the victim’s responsibility to inform the police or other authorities of the allegation;
• require staff to make a judgment about the truth of the allegation of child abuse; or
• prohibit staff from making records in relation to an allegation or disclosure of child abuse.

In the case of an allegation of child abuse, you will:

1. inform appropriate authorities about the allegation (including but not limited to mandatory reporting);
2. protect within reasonable means any child connected to the alleged child abuse until the allegation is resolved; and
3. make, secure, and retain records of the allegation of child abuse and the school’s response to it.
4. phone 000 if you believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse.

This policy was last ratified by School Council on 8th September 2016.
Mandatory Reporting Policy

Mt Martha Primary School

Statement

A broad range of professional groups are identified in the *Children Youth and Families Act 2005* (CYFA) as mandatory reporters. Mandated staff members must make a report to Child Protection as soon as practicable after forming a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection from significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse, and the child’s parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.

The following professionals are prescribed as mandatory reporters under section 182 of the CYFA:

- primary and secondary school teachers and principals (including students in training to become teachers)
- registered medical practitioners (including psychiatrists)
- nurses (including school nurses)
- police

There may be times when two or more mandated staff members, for example a teacher and a principal, have formed a belief about the same child or young person on the same occasion. In this situation it is sufficient for only one of the mandated staff members to make a report. The other staff member is obliged to ensure that the report has been made and that all of the grounds for their own belief were included in the report made by the other staff member.

**Non - mandated staff members**

Section 183 of the CYFA states that any person, who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection, may report their concerns to Child Protection. This means that any person, including non-mandated school staff, is able to make a report to Child Protection when they believe that a child or young person is at risk of harm and in need of protection, and the child’s parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.
Forming a belief on reasonable grounds

A person may form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection after becoming aware that a child or young person’s health, safety or wellbeing is at risk and the child’s parents are unwilling or unable to protect the child.

There may be reasonable grounds for forming such a belief if:

- a child or young person states that they have been physically or sexually abused.
- a child or young person states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves).
- someone who knows the child or young person states that the child or young person has been physically or sexually abused.
- a child shows signs of being physically or sexually abused.
- the staff member is aware of persistent family violence or parental substance misuse, psychiatric illness or intellectual disability that is impacting on the child or young person’s safety, stability or development.
- the staff member observes signs or indicators of abuse, including non-accidental or unexplained injury, persistent neglect, poor care or lack of appropriate supervision.
- a child’s actions or behaviour may place them at risk of significant harm and the child’s parents are unwilling or unable to protect the child.

Reporting a belief

Staff members, whether or not mandated, need to report their belief when the belief is formed in the course of undertaking their professional duties. A report must be made as soon as practicable after forming the belief and on each occasion on which they become aware of any further reasonable grounds for the belief.

If one staff member has a different view from another staff member about making a report and the staff member continues to hold the belief that a child is in need of protection, that person is obliged to make a report to Child Protection.

Protecting the identity of the reporter

Confidentiality is provided for reporters under the CYFA. The CYFA prevents disclosure of the name or any information likely to lead to the identification of a person who has made a report in accordance with legislation, except in specific circumstances.

The identity of a reporter must remain confidential unless:

- the reporter chooses to inform the child, young person or family of the report.
- the reporter consents in writing to their identity being disclosed.
- a court or tribunal decides that it is necessary for the identity of the reporter to be disclosed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child.
• a court or tribunal decides that, in the interests of justice, the reporter is required to attend court to provide evidence.

Information provided during a protective investigation may be used in a court report if the risks to the child or young person require the case to proceed to court. In these circumstances, the source of the information may be required to provide evidence to the court.

If Child Protection decides that the report is about a significant concern for the wellbeing of a child, they may refer the report to a community-based child and family service and disclose the identity of the reporter to that service. However, the CYFA provides that neither Child Protection nor the community-based child and family service may disclose the reporter’s identity to any other person without the reporter’s consent.

Professional protection for reporters

If a report is made in good faith:

• it does not constitute unprofessional conduct or a breach of professional ethics on the part of the reporter.

• the reporter cannot be held legally liable in respect of the report.

This means that a person who makes a report in accordance with the legislation will not be held liable for the eventual outcome of any investigation of the report.

Failure to report

A failure by mandated professionals and staff members to report a reasonable belief that a child is in need of protection from significant harm as a result of physical or sexual abuse may result in the person being prosecuted and a court imposing a fine under the CYFA.

Making a report to Child Protection

The CYFA allows for two types of reports to be made in relation to significant concerns for the safety or wellbeing of a child – a report to Child Protection or a referral to Child FIRST.

A report to Child Protection should be considered if, after taking into account all of the available information, the staff member forms a view that the child or young person is in need of protection because:

• the harm or risk of harm has a serious impact on the child’s immediate safety, stability or development.

• the harm or risk of harm is persistent and entrenched and is likely to have a serious impact on the child’s safety, stability or development.

• the child’s parents cannot or will not protect the child or young person from harm.
Where during the course of carrying out their normal duties, a school staff member forms the belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection, the staff member must make a report to Child Protection regarding this belief and the reasonable grounds for it as soon as practicable.

Staff members may form a professional judgement or belief, in the course of undertaking their professional duties based on:

- warning signs or indicators of harm that have been observed or inferred from information about the child.
- legal requirements, such as mandatory reporting.
- knowledge of child and adolescent development.
- consultation with colleagues and other professionals.
- professional obligations and duty-of-care responsibilities.
- established protocols.
- internal policies and procedures in an individual licensed children’s service or school.

Upon receipt of a report, Child Protection may seek further information, usually from professionals who may also be involved with the child or family, to determine whether further action is required.

In most circumstances, Child Protection will inform the reporter of the outcome of the report. When the report is classified by Child Protection as a Wellbeing Report, Child Protection will, in turn, make a referral to Child FIRST.

Any person who is registered as a teacher under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, or any person who has been granted permission to teach under that Act, including principals, is mandated to make a report to Child Protection. In the course of undertaking their professional duties, mandated staff members are required to report their belief, when the belief is formed on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from significant harm as a result of sexual abuse or physical injury.

School policy and procedures stipulate how teaching staff fulfil their duty of care towards children and young people in their school.

Teachers are encouraged to discuss any concerns about the safety and wellbeing of students with the principal. If a principal does not wish to make a mandatory report, this does not discharge the teacher’s obligation to do so if they have formed a reasonable belief that abuse may have occurred. If the teacher’s concerns continue, even after consultation with the principal, that teacher is still legally obliged to make a mandatory report of their concerns.

Information about the identity of a person making a report to Child Protection must be kept confidential unless the reporter consents to the disclosure of their identity. If the staff member wishes to remain anonymous, this information should be conveyed at the time that the reporter makes the mandatory report.

**The role of school staff**

School staff have a duty of care to protect and preserve the safety, health and wellbeing of children and young people in their care and staff must always act in the best interests of those children and
young people. If a staff member has any concerns regarding the health, safety or wellbeing of a child or young person it is important to take immediate action.

Note: The role of investigating an allegation of child abuse rests solely with Child Protection and/or Victoria Police.

The roles and responsibilities of staff in supporting children and young people who are involved with Child Protection may include acting as a support person for students, attending Child Protection case plan meetings, observing and monitoring students’ behaviour, and liaising with professionals.

Confidentiality

Staff must respect confidentiality when dealing with a case of suspected child abuse and neglect, and may discuss case details and the identity of the child or the young person and their family only with those involved in managing the situation.

When a child or young person has moved to another school, professional judgement should be exercised as to what information needs to be passed on. This will be guided by usual procedures for passing on information about a child’s general wellbeing or special needs, and the role of the school in any ongoing care plans.

Interviews at Victorian schools

Child Protection may conduct interviews of children and young people at school without parental knowledge or consent. However, a child will be interviewed at a Victorian school only in exceptional circumstances and if it is in the child’s best interests to proceed in this manner. Child Protection will notify the school of any intention to interview a child or young person. This may occur regardless of whether the school is the source of the report to Child Protection.

When Child Protection practitioners arrive at the school, the principal or their nominee should ask to see their identification before allowing Child Protection to have access to the child or young person.

Support persons

Children and young people should be advised of their right to have a supportive adult present during interviews. If a child is too young to understand the significance of the interview, a staff member should make arrangements for a supportive adult to attend with the child.

A staff member may be identified as a support person for the child or young person during the interview. Prior to the commencement of the interview, the Child Protection practitioner should always authorise the staff member to receive information regarding Child Protection’s investigation.

This may occur verbally or in writing using the relevant Child Protection proforma.

Independent persons must refrain from providing their opinions or accounts of events during interviews. A principal or their delegate may act as an independent person when the child or young person is to be interviewed, unless they believe that doing so will create a conflict of interest.

Advising parents, carers or guardians

Staff do not require the permission of parents, carers or guardians to make a report to Child Protection, nor are they required to tell parents, carers or guardians that they have done so.
It is the responsibility of Child Protection to advise the parents, carers or guardians of the interview at the earliest possible opportunity. This should occur either before, or by the time the child arrives home.

Ensuring that a Child Protection interview takes place

The school does not have the power to prevent parents, carers or guardians from removing their children from the school and should not attempt to prevent the parents, carers or guardians from collecting the child. If a parent/carer or guardian removes a child before a planned interview has taken place, the principal and/or their nominee should contact Child Protection or Victoria Police immediately.

Staff Training

Staff will be informed of Mandatory Reporting requirements as part of their initial induction to the school and will be provided with supporting documentation in the Staff handbook which is updated annually. All staff will complete the DET online training modules as per the DET schedule.

This policy was last ratified by School Council on 8th September 2016.
THE VICTORIAN TEACHING PROFESSION CODE OF ETHICS

As teachers, we use our expert knowledge to provide experiences that inspire and facilitate student learning. We are a significant force in developing a knowledgeable, creative, productive and democratic society. The values that underpin our profession are integrity, respect and responsibility.

We hold a unique position of trust and influence, which we recognise in our relationships with students, parents (caregivers and guardians), colleagues and the community.

We demonstrate our integrity by:
- acting in the best interest of students
- maintaining a professional relationship with students, parents, colleagues and the community
- behaving in ways that respect and advance the profession.

We demonstrate our respect by:
- acting with care and compassion
- treating students fairly and impartially
- holding our colleagues in high regard
- acknowledging parents as partners in the education of their children.

We demonstrate our responsibility by:
- providing quality teaching
- maintaining and developing our professional practice
- working cooperatively with colleagues in the best interest of our students.

The purpose of this code is to:
- state the value that guides our practice and conduct
- enable us as a profession to affirm our public accountability
- promote public confidence in our profession.

The Code sets out the ideals to which we aspire.
SECTION 1: PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Teachers’ professional conduct is characterised by the quality of the relationships they have with their students, their students’ parents (guardians and caregivers), families and communities and their colleagues.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

PRINCIPLE 1.1: TEACHERS PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL STUDENTS TO LEARN
The main focus of teaching is student learning. Teachers demonstrate their commitment to student learning by:

a. knowing their students well, respecting their individual differences and catering for their individual abilities
b. maintaining a safe and challenging learning environment
c. accepting professional responsibility for the provision of quality teaching
d. having high expectations of every student, recognising and developing each student’s abilities, skills and talents
e. considering all viewpoints fairly
f. communicating well and appropriately with their students.

PRINCIPLE 1.2: TEACHERS TREAT THEIR STUDENTS WITH COURTESY AND DIGNITY
Teachers:

a. work to create an environment which promotes mutual respect
b. model and engage in respectful and impartial language
c. protect students from intimidation, embarrassment, humiliation or harm
d. enhance student autonomy and sense of self worth and encourage students to develop and reflect on their own values
e. respect a student’s privacy in sensitive matters, such as health or family problems, and only reveal confidential matters when appropriate. That is:
   ■ if the student has consented to the information being used in a certain way
   ■ to prevent or lessen a serious threat to life, health, safety or welfare of a person (including the student)
   ■ as part of an investigation into unlawful activity
   ■ if the disclosure is required or mandated by law
   ■ to prevent a crime or enforce the law
f. refrain from discussing students’ personal problems in situations where the information will not be treated confidentially
g. use consequences commensurate with the offence when disciplining students.

PRINCIPLE 1.3: TEACHERS WORK WITHIN THE LIMITS OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE
In fulfilling their role, teachers carry out a wide range of responsibilities. They support students by knowing their strengths and the limits of their professional expertise. Teachers:

a. seek to ensure that they have the physical, mental and emotional capacity to carry out their professional responsibilities
b. are aware of the role of other professionals and agencies and when students should be referred to them for assistance
c. are truthful when making statements about their qualifications and competencies.
PRINCIPLE 1.4: TEACHERS MAINTAIN OBJECTIVITY IN THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

In their professional role, teachers do not behave as a friend or a parent. They:

a. interact with students without displaying bias or preference
b. make decisions in students’ best interests
c. do not draw students into their personal agendas
d. do not seek recognition at the expense of professional objectivity and goals.

PRINCIPLE 1.5: TEACHERS ARE ALWAYS IN A PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE STUDENTS IN THEIR SCHOOL, WHETHER AT SCHOOL OR NOT

Teachers hold a unique position of influence and trust that should not be violated or compromised. They exercise their responsibilities in ways that recognise that there are limits or boundaries to their relationships with students. The following examples outline some of those limits.

A professional relationship will be violated if a teacher:

a. has a sexual relationship with a student
b. uses sexual innuendo or inappropriate language and/or material with students
c. teaches a student without a valid reason
d. holds conversations of a personal nature or has contact with a student via written or electronic means including email, letters, telephone, text messages or chat lines, without a valid context
e. accepts gifts, which could be reasonably perceived as being used to influence them, from students or their parents.

A professional relationship may be compromised if a teacher:

a. attends parties or socialises with students
b. invites a student or students back to their home, particularly if no-one else is present.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS (GUARDIANS, CAREGIVERS), FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

PRINCIPLE 1.6: TEACHERS MAINTAIN A PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENTS (GUARDIANS AND CAREGIVERS)

Teachers should be respectful of and courteous to parents. Teachers:

a. consider parents’ perspectives when making decisions which have an impact on the education or wellbeing of a student
b. communicate and consult with parents in a timely, understandable and sensitive manner
c. take appropriate action when responding to parental concerns.

PRINCIPLE 1.7: TEACHERS WORK IN COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS’ FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Teachers recognise that their students come from a diverse range of cultural contexts and seek to work collaboratively with students’ families and communities within those contexts.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH COLLEAGUES

PRINCIPLE 1.8: COLLEGIATIVITY IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE WORK OF TEACHERS

Teachers demonstrate collegiality by:

a. treating each other with courtesy and respect
b. valuing the input of their colleagues
c. using appropriate forums for constructive debate on professional matters
d. sharing expertise and knowledge in a variety of collaborative contexts
e. respecting different approaches to teaching
f. providing support for each other, particularly those new to the profession
g. sharing information relating to the wellbeing of students.
SECTION 2: PERSONAL CONDUCT

PRINCIPLE 2.1: THE PERSONAL CONDUCT OF A TEACHER WILL HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE PROFESSIONAL STANDING OF THAT TEACHER AND ON THE PROFESSION AS A WHOLE

Although there is no definitive boundary between the personal and professional conduct of a teacher, it is expected that teachers will:

a. be positive role models at school and in the community
b. respect the rule of law and provide a positive example in the performance of civil obligations
c. not exploit their position for personal or financial gain
d. ensure that their personal or financial interests do not interfere with the performance of their duties
e. act with discretion and maintain confidentiality when discussing workplace issues.

SECTION 3: PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

PRINCIPLE 3.1: TEACHERS VALUE THEIR PROFESSIONALISM, AND SET AND MAINTAIN HIGH STANDARDS OF COMPETENCE

Teachers:

a. are knowledgeable in their areas of expertise
b. are committed to pursuing their own professional learning
c. complete their duties in a responsible, thorough and timely way.

PRINCIPLE 3.2: TEACHERS ARE AWARE OF THE LEGAL REQUIREMENTS THAT PERTAIN TO THEIR PROFESSION. IN PARTICULAR, THEY ARE COGNISANT OF THEIR LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN RELATION TO:

- discrimination, harassment and vilification
- negligence
- mandatory reporting
- privacy
- occupational health and safety
- teacher registration.
As teachers, we use our expert knowledge to provide experiences that inspire and facilitate student learning. We are a significant force in developing a knowledgeable, creative, productive and democratic society. The values that underpin our profession are integrity, respect and responsibility.

We hold a unique position of trust and influence, which we recognise in our relationships with students, parents (caregivers and guardians), colleagues and the community.

We demonstrate our integrity by:
- acting in the best interest of students
- maintaining a professional relationship with students, parents, colleagues and the community
- behaving in ways that respect and advance the profession.

We demonstrate our respect by:
- acting with care and compassion
- treating students fairly and impartially
- holding our colleagues in high regard
- acknowledging parents as partners in the education of their children.

We demonstrate our responsibility by:
- providing quality teaching
- maintaining and developing our professional practice
- working cooperatively with colleagues in the best interest of our students.

The purpose of this code is to:
- state the value that guides our practice and conduct
- enable us as a profession to affirm our public accountability
- promote public confidence in our profession.

The Code sets out the ideals to which we aspire.
Victorian Institute of Teaching
Level 9, 628 Bourke Street
Melbourne 3000
PO Box 531
Collins Street West
Victoria 8007
Telephone: 1300 888 067
Email: vit@vit.vic.edu.au
Website: www.vit.vic.edu.au

Early childhood teacher hotline:
1300 977 263
INTEGRITY – public officials should demonstrate integrity.

3.6 Reporting Unethical Behaviour Public sector employees comply with legislation, policies and lawful instructions in the performance of their work. Public sector employees report to an appropriate authority workplace behaviour that violates any law, rule or regulation or represents corrupt conduct, mismanagement of public resources, or is a danger to public health or safety or to the environment. Public sector employers inform their employees of their rights and responsibilities under ‘whistleblower’ and similar legislation.

3.10 Criminal Offences Public sector employees advise their manager if they are charged with a criminal offence, which is punishable by imprisonment or, if found guilty, could reasonably be seen to affect their ability to meet the inherent requirements of the work they are engaged to perform.

3.11 Drugs and Alcohol Public sector employees carry out their work safely and avoid conduct that puts themselves or others at risk. This includes the misuse of alcohol, drugs or other substances when at work or when engaged in work related activities. The misuse of alcohol, prescribed drugs, illegal drugs and other substances is an issue for both employers and employees as it impacts on both work and personal life and in some cases the reputation of their public sector body. Public sector employees who are on medication that could affect their work performance or the safety of themselves or others inform their manager or supervisor to ensure any necessary precautions or adjustments to work can be put in place.

RESPECT – public officials should demonstrate respect for colleagues, other public officials and members of the Victorian community.

6.1 Fair and Objective Treatment Public sector employees promote an environment that encourages respect. Public sector employees are fair, objective and courteous in their dealings with the Government, community and other public sector employees.

6.2 Privacy and Confidentiality Public sector employees understand the importance of privacy and confidentiality. Confidential information requires special treatment and protection. Those people who provide confidential information to public sector employees have the right to expect this information will be treated as confidential. Public sector employees with access to confidential information ensure it remains confidential, and at all times act in accordance with legislation and policies relating to dealing with private information.

6.4 Equity and Diversity Public sector employees follow the spirit as well as the letter of the law relating to discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation. Public sector
employees create an environment that is free of discrimination, harassment and bullying. Valuing and promoting diversity is an important element of demonstrating respect.

LEADERSHIP – public officials should demonstrate leadership.

7.1 Leading by Example Public sector employees model the behaviours based on the public sector values and at all times act in an ethical manner. Leadership is about positive influence, inspiring and empowering others. Providing sound advice, delivering high quality services and encouraging best practice demonstrates responsiveness. Being honest, using powers correctly, identifying and dealing with inappropriate conduct, avoiding conflicts of interest and developing and maintaining public trust demonstrates integrity. Making decisions that are free of bias, considering all relevant facts and ensuring policies and programs are implemented fairly demonstrates impartiality. Being transparent, responsible, using resources efficiently and inviting scrutiny demonstrates accountability. Treating others fairly, eliminating discrimination, harassment and bullying, and focusing on improving outcomes demonstrates respect.

7.3 Supporting Others Public sector employees work co-operatively with their colleagues and other public sector body employees. They support and learn from them and accept differences in personal style. They respect, and seek when necessary, the professional opinions of colleagues in their area of competence, and acknowledge their contribution. Public sector employees, managers and supervisors provide other public sector employees with support and guidance.

HUMAN RIGHTS – public officials should respect and promote the human rights set out in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

8.2 Making Decisions and Providing Advice Consistent with Human Rights Public sector employees ensure their own decisions, advice and policy development properly considers the human rights set out in the Charter, and respects the human rights of others.

8.4 Protecting Human Rights Public sector employees seek to protect the human rights of colleagues, other public officials and members of the Victorian community by raising concerns regarding circumstances that could breach those rights, and reporting any suspected breaches in accordance with procedures established by their public sector employer.