



Child Safe Code of Conduct

Introduction

Plenty River College (the College) is an independent, specialist senior secondary school, delivering the Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC) and VCE Vocational Major (VM). It provides a safe and inclusive learning environment for young people aged 15-20 years who may have been disengaged or are at risk of disengaging from education.

Plenty River College is a school of opportunities in which all students are empowered to achieve their personal best. Our mission is to assist students to develop life and work skills and achieve in their learning by:

- re-engaging them in education;
- fostering their social and emotional development; and
- providing a supportive and safe and environment for them.

Rationale

Plenty River College is committed to child safety and will comply with **Ministerial Order (MO) 1359: Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises**.

The College is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Our College recognises the importance of, and a responsibility for, ensuring that our students are safe and supported within the College environment. It also strives to create an 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.

Purpose

The purpose of this Child Safe Code of Conduct of Conduct is to protect students and reduce any opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur to students in the College environment. The Child Safe Code of Conduct outlines appropriate standards of behaviour for all adults towards students at the College. It provides detailed guidance on how to best support students and how to avoid or better manage difficult situations.

Scope

The Child Safe Code of Conduct applies to College Board members, staff members, including non-teaching staff and temporary or casual staff, volunteers, contractors and service providers, external education providers, and visitors.

Definitions

Adult	A person who is 18 years of age or older
Child or young person	Means a child or young person enrolled as a student at the College
Child Abuse	Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • any act committed against a child involving— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a sexual offence or ○ an offence under section 49B (2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming) • the infliction, on a child, of— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ physical violence or ○ serious emotional or psychological harm • serious neglect of a child.
Executive Principal	The Executive Principal of the College is the nominated Child Safety Officer at the College.
Grooming offence	Grooming is a criminal offence under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.). This offence targets predatory conduct undertaken by an adult to prepare a child (aged under the age of 16 years), to engage in sexual activity at a later time. Grooming can include communicating and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent.
Mandatory Reporting	Mandatory reporting is the legal requirement for certain professional groups (mandatory reporters) to report a reasonable belief of child physical or sexual abuse to DHHS Child Protection.
Mandatory Reporters	Within the College, mandatory reporters include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registered teachers, including principals; • staff who have been granted permission to teach by the VIT; • registered doctors and nurses; • registered psychologists; and • youth welfare workers.
Parents	Includes parents, guardians, step-parents and/or carers as listed in the College Enrolment Form
Restrictive interventions	Practices which limit the rights or freedom of movement of a student, primarily used to protect the student or others from harm in emergency or life-threatening situations.

Responsibility

The College Board is responsible for authorising this Child Safe Code of Conduct, the College's Child Safety Policy, Mandatory Reporting Policy and other related policies in accordance with **Ministerial Order (MO) 1359: Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises**.

1. The Executive Principal is the nominated Child Safety Officer and is responsible for:
 - implementing policies, processes and procedures to protect students, reduce any opportunities for abuse to occur and promote child safety in the College;
 - ensuring all College staff, volunteers and contractors are aware of their individual responsibility for promoting the safety and wellbeing of students and have signed the Child Safe Code of Conduct Agreement; and
 - reporting to the Victorian Institute of Teaching any charges, committals for trial or convictions in relation to a sexual offence by a registered teacher, or certain allegations or concerns about a registered teacher.

Statement of Commitment

Plenty River College is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. The College has **zero tolerance for child abuse**. The College is committed to providing a child safe environment where all students are safe, and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives.

This Child Safe Code of Conduct is consistent with the College's child safety strategies, policies and procedures as revised from time to time.

Procedures for responding to allegations of suspected child abuse apply to allegations or disclosures of child abuse made by or in relation to a child, College staff, visitors, or other persons while connected to a school environment.

Plenty River College is committed to:

- promoting and protecting the best interests of all students;
- safeguarding students who are attending the College in an e-learning environment and/or off-site environment;
- the safety, participation and empowerment of all students;
- preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks, including risks presented by physical and online environments;
- regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks;
- keeping all stakeholders (students, staff, parents, College Board and community members) up to date and informed about the College's commitment to child safety, policies, practice and procedures. This includes: knowing how to identify, discuss and report child safety; supporting or assisting any student who discloses child abuse, or are otherwise to suspected child abuse;
- sensitively supporting, encouraging and enabling College staff, parents and students to

understand, identify, discuss and report child safety matters.

The College supports and respects all students as well as our staff and volunteers. All students at our College, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse, harm or maltreatment.

Every staff member at the College has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play to ensure the wellbeing and safety of our students.

Embedding the Code of Conduct of Conduct

The Executive Principal will ensure the implementation and monitoring of the Child Safe Code of Conduct, and will plan, implement and monitor arrangements to provide inclusive, safe and orderly College and other learning environments. The Executive Principal will also provide information and support to staff, students and the College community to enable the Child Safe Code of Conduct to operate effectively.

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

Acceptable behaviours

All College staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the College community involved in child-related work individually, are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of students by:

- upholding a commitment to child safety at all times and adhering to the College's Child Safe Policy, including the Child Safe Code of Conduct and other related policies;
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children and young people from abuse;
- treating students and families in the College community with respect, both within the College environment and outside the College environment, as part of normal social and community activities, including listening to and valuing their ideas and opinions;
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling you that they or another student has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another student;
- welcoming students and their families and being inclusive;
- 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;
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of students that are vulnerable;
- modelling appropriate adult behaviour;

- following the [Four Critical Actions](#) when raising a concern about breaches of the Child Safe Code of Conduct and/or making a report;
- listening to students and responding to them appropriately;
- reporting and acting on any breaches of the Child Safe Code of Conduct, complaints and concerns;
- complying with the College's guidelines on physical contact with students (see unacceptable behaviours);
- understanding and complying with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) as they relate to protecting students from harm or abuse;
- if child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm; and
- respecting the privacy of students and their families and only disclosing information to people who need to know.

Unacceptable behaviours

All College staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the College community involved in child-related work 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 students 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 College work or extra-curricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter;
- photograph or video a child in the College environment except in accordance with College policy or where required for duty of care purposes. The College must obtain consent before taking and publishing photos of a student. Written consent is sought at the beginning of each year from parents. This also applies for excursions and College activities;

- engage in rough physical games;
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with students or do things of a personal nature that students can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes;
- treat a child unfavourably or discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability or sexuality;
- in the College environment or at other College events where students are present, consume alcohol contrary to College policy, or take illicit drugs under any circumstances.

Making a professional judgement

Adults at the College will:

- discuss any misunderstandings, accidents or threats with Executive Principal;
- be aware of their position of trust and ensure an unequal balance of power is not used for their own or others personal advantage or gratification;
- not use their position to intimidate, bully, humiliate, threaten, coerce or undermine children;
- maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behaviour which might be misinterpreted by others; and
- not promote relationships which create a personal friendship or are of an inappropriate nature.

Personal/living space

Adults at the College will:

- not invite a child into their home or any home or domestic setting frequented by them;
- be vigilant in maintaining their own privacy and mindful of the need to avoid placing themselves in vulnerable situations;
- not ask children to undertake personal jobs or errands; and
- maintain professional boundaries.

Gifts, rewards and favouritism

Adults at the College will:

- be cautious of gift giving to an individual as part of a reward system which should be based on collective or team based positive reinforcement;
- ensure that if operating reward/award systems, methods and criteria for selection of students for awards are fair and transparent; and
- be wary of receiving any gifts from students which may be misconstrued by others.

Infatuations

Adults at the College will:

- deal with infatuations sensitively and appropriately to maintain the dignity and safety of all concerned;
- make sure their own behaviour is beyond reproach; and
- if they become aware of an infatuation developing or any indications that it may, record it and discuss it with Executive Principal/Child Safe Officer so that action can be taken to avoid any hurt, distress or embarrassment.

Communicating with students (including the use of technology)

Adults at the College will:

- ensure communication with students takes place within clear and explicit professional boundaries, including the wider use of technology such as mobile phones, text messaging, e-mails, digital cameras, videos, web-cams, websites, and blogs;
- not share any personal information with a student;
- not request, or respond to, any personal information from a student, other than that which may be appropriate as part of their professional role;
- not give their personal contact details to students, including their mobile number, home phone or personal e-mail address, unless the need to do so is agreed with the Executive Principal and parents;
- only use equipment provided by the College to communicate with students, making sure that parents have given permission for this form of communication to be used;
- only contact students for professional reasons and in accordance with College policy;
- only use text messaging as a last resort when no other forms of communication are possible;
- not use internet, web-based or social media communication channels to send messages; and
- use internal e-mail systems in accordance with the College's policy.

Social Contact

Adults at the College will:

- not have social contact with students unless the reason for this has been firmly established and agreed with the Executive Principal;
- not have secret social contact with students and/or their parent(s);
- advise the Executive Principal of any social contact that has occurred which may raise concern; and
- report and record any situation which may place a student at risk or may compromise the College or their own professional standing.

Sexual Contact

Adults at the College will:

- not engage in sexual activity with or in the presence of a student, or cause or incite a student to engage in or watch sexual activity (to do so would be considered a criminal offence);
- not have any form of communication which could be interpreted as sexually suggestive or provocative, or make sexual remarks to, or about, a student either verbally, written or electronically;
- not discuss their own sexual relationships with or in the presence of students;
- ensure language, attitudes and demeanour do not give rise to comment or speculation; and
- be aware that consistently displaying special attention and favour upon a student might be construed as part of a grooming process, and as such will give rise to concerns about behaviour.

Physical Contact

Adults at the College will:

- be aware that even well-intentioned physical contact may be misconstrued by the student, an observer, or by anyone to whom this action is described;
- only have physical contact with a student when it is necessary and in ways which are appropriate to their professional or agreed role and responsibilities, never touch a student in a way which may be considered indecent;
- be aware of the student's reactions or feelings and, as far as possible, only use a level of contact which is acceptable to the student and for the minimum time necessary;
- not assume that when a student is distressed they seek physical comfort;
- always be prepared to report and explain actions, and accept that all physical contact is open to scrutiny;
- be aware of cultural or religious views about touching, and be sensitive to issues of gender;
- where there is regular physical contact needed, the nature of this must be agreed with the Executive Principal and the parent as part of a formally agreed plan; and
- where a student initiates inappropriate physical contact, you must sensitively deter them and help them understand the importance of personal boundaries as well as raise your concern with the Executive Principal.

Behaviour Management

Adults at the College will:

- not use any form of degrading treatment towards a student;
- not use sarcasm, demeaning or insensitive comments;
- ensure any sanctions and rewards are part of an agreed behaviour management policy;
- try to defuse situations before they escalate;

- use restrictive interventions strictly as a last resort and only in accordance with the College's Restrictive Interventions Policy;
- never use corporal punishment which is prohibited,
- be mindful of other factors which may be impacting on a student's behaviour, such as bullying, or changes in home circumstances.

One to one situations/home visits

The College does not allow staff to visit students at home. However, where this is completely necessary and where a one to one situation is unavoidable, adults at the College will:

- avoid meetings with a student in secluded areas;
- always inform colleagues and/or parents about one to one contact beforehand, assessing the need to have them present or close by;
- avoid the use of 'engaged' or equivalent signs, where ever possible, these create an opportunity for secrecy or the interpretation of secrecy;
- carefully consider the need of the student when in a one to one situation, and always report any situation where the student becomes distressed or angry towards you;
- gain approval from the Executive Principal for any home visit, ensuring it is an integral part of your role; and
- never put yourself into a one to one situation when little or no information is available about the student.

Transporting

College staff are not to transport students in their own car. If transport must be provided, this must be in a taxi or hired car, accompanied by an adult staff member.

Excursions and Camps

Adults at the College will:

- recognise that they are in a position of trust and ensure that their behaviour remains professional at all times and stays clearly within defined boundaries;
- ensure staff/student ratios and gender mix are appropriate;
- always have another adult present in activities outside of College or normal College hours;
- ensure risk assessments are undertaken; and
- have parental consent to the activity.

Photography and Videos

Adults at the College will:

- be clear about the purpose of any activity involving photography and what will happen to the images when the activity is concluded;

- be able to justify the reason for having images of students in their possession;
- avoid making images in one-to-one situations, or situations that may be construed as secretive, or which show a single student with no surrounding context;
- only use equipment provided or authorised by the College;
- immediately report any concerns if inappropriate or intrusive images are found;
- have parental consent to take, display and/or distribute any images of children; and
- not use images that may cause distress or offence.

Access to inappropriate images and internet usage

Adults at the College will:

- not access, make or store indecent images of students on the internet - to do so would be illegal and lead to a criminal investigation;
- not make or store images of students, gathered as a result of their work, on personal equipment;
- follow the College's guidance on the use of ICT equipment;
- ensure that students are not exposed to unsuitable material through ICT;
- ensure that any materials shown to students are age appropriate; and
- immediately report any concerns, if inappropriate or intrusive images are found, to the Executive Principal and follow the College's Mandatory Reporting Policy processes and procedures.

Report any concerns

Whenever a College staff member has any concerns that a student is in immediate danger, they should contact the Police on 000.

If College staff, Board members, volunteers or contractors have significant concerns for the wellbeing of a student, they should report their concerns to the Executive Principal.

All communications will be treated confidentially.

It is important to note that even if other staff members do not share the same view, the staff member is still required to make a report on each occasion they form a reasonable view that a student is at risk.

Where a mandatory reporter undertakes to make the report, the Executive Principal is required to confirm that the report has been made DHHS Child Protection.

Please refer to the College's Mandatory Reporting Policy for full details about mandatory reporting and making a report.

Child Safe Code of Conduct Agreement

All College staff, volunteers and contractors are individually responsible for promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, and are required to agree to, sign and comply with, the

standards of behaviour listed in the Child Safe Code of Conduct Agreement. See **Appendix 1: Child Safe Code of Conduct Agreement for more details.**

Communication

To ensure the Code of Conduct is fully appreciated, understood and applied by all College staff, parents, volunteers, visiting personnel including contractors, the following actions will be taken:

- This Child Safe Code of Conduct will be communicated to the College community through the College website;
- College staff will be informed of their responsibilities under the Child Safe Code of Conduct through:
 - attending the College induction program for new staff;
 - receiving a copy of the Child Safe Code of Conduct at the first staff meeting at the start of the College year;
 - retaining child safety as an agenda item at staff meetings to facilitate improvements in the Child Safe Code of Conduct;
 - attending appropriate child safe professional development activities (refer to the College's Child Safe Policy for more details); and
 - the College VCAL Teachers' Handbook.

Appendices
Appendix 1: Child Safe Code of Conduct Agreement
Related policies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accident and Incident Reporting • Bullying and Harassment Prevention • Camps and Excursions • Child Safe • Coronavirus • Critical Incident and Emergency Management • Digital Technologies and Social Media • Duty of Care • External Providers • Mandatory Reporting • Restrictive Interventions • Student Behaviour Management • Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Inclusion
Related legislation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) • Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic) • Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) • Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic) • Ministerial Order 870: Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools • Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic) • Worker Screening Regulations 2021 (Vic)

Appendix 1: Child Safe Code of Conduct Agreement

Commitment to Child Safety

Plenty River College is committed to being a child safe organisation and protecting children from harm. The College has **zero** tolerance of child abuse and holds all staff, volunteers and contractors responsible for promoting the safety, wellbeing and empowerment of children and young people.

Consequences of Breaching the Child Safe Code of Conduct

Staff, volunteers or contractors who breach this Child Safe Code of Conduct may be subject to disciplinary actions including (but not limited to) enhanced supervision, appointment to an alternative role, suspension or termination from the organisation.

Child Safe Code of Conduct Agreement

All College staff, volunteers and contractors are individually responsible for promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, and are required to agree to, and comply with, the standards of behaviour listed below.

I will:

- adhere to all relevant Australian and Victorian legislation, and uphold the College's Child Safe Statement of Commitment, Child Safe Policy, Mandatory Reporting Policy and other College policies;
- comply with the College guidelines on physical contact with children and young people;
- raise concerns with the Executive Principal if risks to child safety are identified in any of the activities, facilities, structures, procedures or staffing practices at the College;
- take all reasonable steps to protect children and young people from abuse;
- report and act on any behavioural complaints, concerns or observed breaches regarding this Child Safe Code of Conduct;
- report any concern, allegation, disclosure or observation of child abuse as soon as possible to the Executive Principal as outlined in the College's Mandatory Reporting Policy, including the Reportable Conduct Scheme requirements;
- respect the privacy of children, young people and their families by keeping all information regarding Child Protection concerns confidential, only discussing information with the relevant people to follow reporting procedure;
- treat all children and young people with respect, regardless of race, colour, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, culture, property, disability or other status;
- listen to and value children and young people's ideas and opinions;
- welcome all children, young people and their families and carers by being inclusive;
- actively promote cultural safety and inclusion;

- listen to children and young people, and respond to them appropriately;
- conduct myself in a manner consistent with the values of the College;
- work with children and young people in an open and transparent way – other adults should always know about the work being done with children and young people; and
- observe professional boundaries with children and young people at all times, including when seeing a child or young person from the College outside the workplace.

I will not:

- condone or participate in behaviour with children or young people that is illegal, unsafe or abusive;
- ignore behaviours by other adults towards children or young people when they appear to be inappropriate;
- seek to use children or young people in any way to meet the needs of adults;
- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse;
- exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues;
- use hurtful, discriminatory or offensive behaviour or language with children or young people;
- discriminate on the basis of age, sex, gender identity, race, culture or sexual orientation;
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or young people or do things of a personal nature that children or young people can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes;
- arrange personal contact, including online contact, with children and young people I am working with for a purpose unrelated to the College’s activities;
- work with children and young people while under the influence of alcohol or prohibited drugs; and
- use any computer, mobile phone, or video or digital camera to exploit or harass children or young people.

I have read the College’s Child Safe Code of Conduct Agreement and agree to abide by it at all times.

Full Name	
Signature	
Date	/ /