DIOCESE OF BALLARAT CATHOLIC EDUCATION LIMITED

Safeguarding Children & Young People
Code of Conduct

St Joseph's School, Hopetoun operates with the consent of the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat and is operated and governed by the Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL).

Commitment to Child Safety

The DOBCEL Board has particular responsibilities for safeguarding of children and young people as required by the *Ministerial Order No. 1359: Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises*.

This places accountability for managing the risk of child abuse with the DOBCEL Board. Consistent with MO No. 1359, the DOBCEL Board requires schools governed by DOBCEL to have appropriate arrangements to regulate the conduct and decisions of school staff that will benefit students.

These arrangements include implementing and complying with the DOBCEL child safe policies and having clear and comprehensive procedures and reporting mechanisms. The objective is for the DOBCEL Board and the wider school community to be confident in your school's capacity to make and implement appropriate decisions, with child safety front of mind.

The Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL) Board is committed to:

- zero tolerance of child abuse
- listening to and empowering children and young people
- keeping children and young people safe.

As partners with parents/carers, in Catholic education and open to God's presence, DOBCEL schools pursue the fullness of life for all students and their school communities. Schools ensure that the care, wellbeing and protection of their students is in keeping with the Catholic tradition, which celebrates the sanctity and unique dignity of each person.

This code of conduct has a specific focus on safeguarding children and young people from sexual, physical, psychological, and emotional abuse or neglect. It is intended to complement other professional and/or occupational codes.

All DOBCEL Board members, DOBCEL Committee members, DOBCEL staff, volunteers, external providers and contractors, clergy and school advisory council (SAC) members of a school 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 safety and wellbeing policies as well as the expectations for appropriate behaviour towards, and in the company of, children as noted in the following sections. This includes when attending camps and excursions, supervising online classes, or when engaging with students and their caregivers at any time.

To not follow the standards of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour is a breach of this Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct and may result in disciplinary action. Some behaviours on their own may be a serious breach of this code of conduct but, together, may indicate a concerning pattern of behaviours that poses a risk to the safety of children. Disciplinary processes will be followed if breaches have been identified.

As partners in Catholic education and open to God's presence, we pursue fullness of life for all.

Acceptable Behaviours

All DOBCEL Board members, DOBCEL Committee members, DOBCEL staff, volunteers, external providers, contractors, visitors, clergy, and SAC members, as well as any other member of the school community involved in child-connected work, are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

- Adhering to DOBCEL and St Joseph's School's child safe policies and upholding the School's statement of commitment to child safety and wellbeing at all times
- Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- Treating children, young people and families in the school community with respect in the school environment and outside the school environment as part of other social and community activities
- Taking into account the needs of all children and young people, and involving children and young people in decisions about the activities they participate in and welcoming the participation of parents and caregivers
- Listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, 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 children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child's self-identification)
- Treating all children and young people with respect, regardless of race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, cultural background, financial situation, disability or other characteristic
- Never being racist towards anyone and reporting any instances of racism
- Considering the different needs of all children and young people and supporting them to participate fully in programs that help them and their families and caregivers to feel included
- Ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not alone with a child or young person. One-to-one interactions between an adult and a child or young person are to be in an open space or in line of sight of another adult
- Reporting any allegations of child abuse to the School's leadership (or child safety officer)
- Reporting any child safety or wellbeing concerns to the School's leadership or Child Safety Officer/s
- Understanding and complying with all reporting and disclosure obligations including mandatory reporting in line with the St Joseph's PROTECT: Reporting and Responding Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Procedures for Schools and the PROTECT Four Critical Actions
- Understanding and complying with all reporting and disclosure obligations as they relate to the Reportable Conduct Scheme, including reporting allegations of reportable conduct in accordance with the DOBCEL PROTECT: Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy
- Responding to all allegations of child abuse and ensuring as quickly as possible that the child(ren) is/are safe
- Reporting to the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) 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
- Ensuring that all applicable professional or occupational codes of conduct are complied with
- Reporting any conflicts of interest that a staff member may have that could affect their ability to perform their role
- Respecting the privacy of children and their families, including keeping all personal information confidential unless required by law to share it
- Upholding the rights of the child and always prioritising their needs.

Unacceptable Behaviours

All DOBCEL Board members, DOBCEL Committee members, DOBCEL staff, volunteers, external providers, contractors, visitors, clergy, and school advisory council members, as well as any other member of the school community involved in child-connected work, must not:

- Condone or participate in illegal, unsafe, abusive or harmful behaviour towards children or young people; this includes physical violence, sexual abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, grooming, neglect or sexual misconduct
- Ignore, trivialise or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse
- Develop a relationship with a child or young person that could be seen as favouritism or considered tantamount to grooming behaviour (for example, by offering gifts)
- Display behaviours or engage with students in ways that are not justified by the educational or professional context
- Ignore an adult's overly familiar or inappropriate behaviour towards a child or young person
- Treat a child or student 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, is related to schoolwork or extracurricular activities, or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter
- Photograph or video a child or young person in a school environment except with parental permission
- Touch children in a way that is unnecessary or unsuitable and falls outside what is reasonable to teaching children and young people (for example, inappropriate sitting on laps)
- 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
- Put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors that would lead to seclusion)
- Verbally assault a child or create a climate of fear
- Persistently criticise and/or denigrate a child
- Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal sexual experiences or other inappropriate social activities)
- Use inappropriate language or gestures in the presence of a child or young person
- Discriminate against any child based on age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity, or disability
- Have contact with a child or their family outside school without the School's leadership or child safety officer's (if the School has appointed someone to this role) knowledge and/or consent, or the School governing authority's approval (for example, unauthorised after-hours tutoring, private instrumental/other lessons or sport coaching), or without a valid context. Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is not considered inappropriate
- Have any online contact with a child (including by social media, email, instant messaging etc) or their family (unless necessary – for example, by providing families with e-newsletters or assisting students with their schoolwork) without a valid context (for example, a familial relationship exists)
- Have contact with a child or their family using any personal communication channels/device such as a personal email account or messages via applications without a valid context
- Have contact with a child or their family where personal contact details such as phone numbers, social networking sites or email addresses are exchanged without a valid context
- Photograph, video or share images of a child or young person without the consent of the parents/carers
- Work with children whilst under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Consume illegal drugs at school or at school events in the presence of children

- Consume alcohol at school or at school events in the presence of children and young people, except where the principal has given explicit approval to drink moderately (for example, Year 12 Graduation)

Breaches of this Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or the cancellation of a contract or volunteer engagement.

In instances where a reportable allegation has been made, the matter will be managed in accordance with DOBCEL's Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy and may be referred to Victoria Police.

All breaches and suspected breaches of the St Joseph's School Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct must be reported to the Principal.

If the breach or suspected breach relates to the principal, contact Assistant Director – People and Development (CEB) on (03) 4344 4350.

Statement of Commitment

I, _____ *(print name),*

as an *(circle role)* employee, volunteer, contractor, parish priest, School Advisory Council member

of a DOBCEL school, acknowledge and declare that I will abide by the St Joseph's Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct, which I have read and understood.

Signature	
Name *(printed)*	
Date	

Sighted by Principal:

Signature	
Name *(printed)*	
Date	

Approving authority	DOBCEL Board
Approval Date	December 2025
Review Date	December 2027