

Footscray City Primary School

Code of Conduct



‘Teachers are always in a professional relationship with the students in their school, whether at school or not.’¹

1. Introduction

This code of conduct establishes a common understanding of the standards of behaviour expected of all Footscray City Staff. It provides a framework to help guide decision making regarding the appropriate course of action when faced with an ethical issue. Our code of conduct is based on the principles of fairness, respect, integrity and responsibility and relies on the ethical principles and good judgement of each individual employee.

Registered schools have an important responsibility for keeping children safe. Schools already take steps to protect children from abuse.

Standard three (clause nine of the Ministerial Order) requires that the school governing authority develop, endorse and make publicly available a code for all school staff.

The standard has four specific requirements. They are that the code of conduct:

1. has the objective of promoting child safety in the school environment
2. sets standards about the ways in which school staff are expected to behave with children
3. takes into account the interests of school staff (including other professional or occupational codes of conduct that regulate particular school staff such as registered teachers), and the needs of all children, and
4. is consistent with the school's child safety strategies, policies and procedures as revised from time to time.

Please note that the Ministerial Order defines some terms broadly. A full list of definitions is available at www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafe.

All staff employed by or contracted to the Education Department and/or Footscray City Primary School are required to read this document and associated policies and complete and sign the Code of Conduct Agreement.

2. Purpose

This code of conduct provides information about requirement two of the standard, including details of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours in dealing with children. It will assist with the protection of children from abuse and provide clarity to Footscray City Primary School's staff who work with children by clarifying acceptable and unacceptable behaviour by staff.

This code of conduct should be read in conjunction with a Footscray City Primary School's child safety policy and procedures. This advice does not replace any legislative or regulatory obligations or other professional or occupational codes of conduct that regulate particular staff at the school. For example, the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) *Victorian Teaching Profession Codes of Conduct and Ethics* provides clarity regarding professional behaviour expected of teachers at all times. The code specifies behaviour unacceptable for a professional relationship between a teacher and a student. The VIT code provides a useful guide to appropriate behaviour for all school staff.

3. Principles for adult's behaviour in undertaking child-connected work within Footscray City Primary School

Some simple principles should guide an adult's behaviour when undertaking child-connected work such as:

- the adult/child relationship should be professional at all times
- an adult's response to a child's behaviour or circumstance should be commensurate with the child's age and vulnerability and the adult's responsibility for the care, safety and welfare of the child
- an adult should not be alone with a child unless there is line of sight to other adults
- an adult should not initiate or seek physical contact or contact with children outside school.

4. Acceptable and unacceptable behaviours

All staff and school council members at Footscray City Primary School must adhere to the following guidelines when employed by Footscray City Primary School, both within and outside of the school. The list is not exhaustive and staff are advised to refer to ministerial guidelines, the Victorian Institute of Teaching and Footscray City Primary School's Policies and procedures if clarification is required.

Acceptable behaviours

All staff, volunteers and board/school council members are responsible for supporting the safety of children by:

- adhering to the school's child safe policy and upholding the school's statement of commitment to child safety at all times
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- treating everyone in the school community 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 or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child's self-identification)
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance 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 alone with a child
- reporting any allegations of child abuse to the school's leadership (or child safety officer if the school has appointed someone to this role)
- understanding and complying with all reporting obligations as they relate to mandatory reporting and reporting under the *Crimes Act 1958*
- reporting any child safety concerns to the school's leadership (or child safety officer if the school has appointed someone to this role)
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe
- 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.

Unacceptable behaviours

Staff and volunteers must not:

- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.
- develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children).
- exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example inappropriate sitting on laps).
- put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors).
- initiate unnecessary physical contact which children or do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes.
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities).
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children.
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children.
- discriminate against any child, including because of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or disability.

- have contact with a child outside of school without the knowledge of school's leadership team. Examples are unauthorised after hours tutoring, private instrumental/other lessons or sport coaching). Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is appropriate. Play dates and family based celebrations or events organised within personal friendship circles are exempt from this clause.
- have any online contact with a child (including by social media, email, instant messaging etc) or their family (unless necessary eg by providing families with e-newsletters or assisting students with their school work).
- use any personal communication channels/device such as a personal email account.
- exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking sites or email addresses with a student.
- photograph or video a child without the consent of the parent or guardians.
- work with children whilst under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- consume alcohol or drugs at school while working with children. At school events, sanctioned by school council where appropriate separation is created, the responsible service and consumption of alcohol may be permitted.

Code of Conduct Agreement.

I _____ have read and understand my responsibility as an employee of the Victorian Department of Education and a staff member of Footscray City Primary School.

By signing this document, I make a commitment to adhering the above guidelines. I understand that this Code is not exhaustive and will seek clarity from school council or school leadership if a new scenario or situation requires.

Signature _____

Date _____

