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MENTONE GIRLS'
GRAMMAR

**Keeping Our
Students Safe
2021**

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Introduction

Welcome to Mentone Girls' Grammar School!

Whether you are a contractor, a third party education provider or a volunteer, we appreciate your contribution to our school. As a school, we are dedicated to promoting wellbeing in our community. We have zero tolerance of child abuse in any form. As you will be entering our environment, it is important that you understand our key policies and practices in relation to maintaining our Child Safe environment. This booklet includes three key policies:

1. Our Child Protection and Safety Policy, which is an overarching document that outlines key elements of our approach to protecting children from child abuse. It applies to all staff, volunteers and contractors engaged by the school.
2. Our Code of Conduct which outlines the standard of behaviour expected from all staff, contractors and volunteers. It is designed to promote a culture of fair and ethical behaviour.
3. Our list of Child Safety Expected Behaviours, framed in a simple list of behaviours we expect, as well as a clear set of unacceptable behaviours.

All Victorian schools and organisations that work with children must now respond to the Victorian Government's Child Safe Standards under Ministerial Order 870. As a result, we ask you to read through the important information provided in this booklet. We require you to sign the enclosed acknowledgement form to indicate your agreement to abide by these policies while performing your duties at Mentone Girls' Grammar School.

Your agreement represents an acknowledgement that you will work with us in ensuring the safest possible environment for our students at Mentone Girls' Grammar School.

Natalie Charles

Principal

Child Protection and Safety Policy

RATIONALE

Mentone Girls' Grammar School ("The School") has developed the following Child Protection and Safety Policy. This policy is an overarching document that provides key elements of our approach to protecting children from child abuse. It is designed to be communicated through our public website as well as through other media such as newsletters, our annual report and in induction and welcome packs for members of the Mentone Girls' Grammar School Council, the Mentone Girls' Grammar School Foundation, and members of School Governance Committees, staff contractors and volunteers.

OUR CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFETY POLICY

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

- Child abuse* includes sexual offences, grooming, physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, serious neglect and a child's exposure to family violence. The School is committed to the protection of all children from all forms of child abuse and demonstrates this commitment through the implementation of a comprehensive Child Protection Program designed to keep children safe.
- At the School we have a zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. The School regards its child protection responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such, is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations and maintain a child safe culture.

Child Safe Principles

Mentone Girls' Grammar School's commitment to child safety is based on the following overarching principles that guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse.

1. All children have the right to be safe.
2. The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
3. The views of the child and a child's privacy must be respected.
4. Clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our Code of Conduct and Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Policy.
5. The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture.
6. Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our School community.
7. Procedures are in place to screen all staff, Direct Contact Volunteers** third party contractors and external education providers who have direct contact with children.
8. Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.
9. Child protection training is mandatory for all members of the Mentone Girls' Grammar School Council, Mentone Girls' Grammar School Foundation and School Governance Committees, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers.
10. Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the School community.
11. Children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds have the right to special care and support including those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
12. Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

* child abuse includes:

- a. any act committed against a child involving –
 - i. a sexual offence; or
 - ii. an offence under section 49B(2) of the Crimes Act 1958 (grooming); and
- b. the infliction, on a child, of –
 - i. physical violence; or
 - ii. serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- c. serious neglect of a child.

** **Direct contact volunteers** are those volunteers who are involved in providing support, guidance and supervision directly to students and could potentially have direct unsupervised contact with students during the normal course of providing the volunteer service.

OBJECTIVES

This policy provides the framework for:

- the development of work systems, practices, policies and procedures that promote child protection within Mentone Girls' Grammar School;
- the creation of a positive and robust child protection culture;
- the promotion and open discussion of child protection issues within the School; and
- complying with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child protection in Victoria.

CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAM

The School is committed to the effective implementation of our Child Protection Program and ensuring that it is appropriately reviewed and updated. We adopt a risk management approach by identifying key risks and assessing child safety risks based on a range of factors including the nature of our School's activities, physical and online environments and the characteristics of the student body.

Our Child Protection Program relates to all aspects of protecting children from abuse and establishes work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse. It includes:

- clear information as to what constitutes child abuse and associated key risk indicators;
- clear procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse;
- strategies to support, encourage and enable staff, volunteers (direct and indirect), third party contractors, external education providers, parents and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child protection matters;
- procedures for recruiting and screening members of the Mentone Girls' Grammar School Council, the Mentone Girls' Grammar School Foundation, and members of School Governance Committees, staff and Direct Contact Volunteers;
- pastoral care strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe;
- policies with respect to cultural diversity and students with disabilities;
- a child protection training program;
- information regarding the steps to take after a disclosure of abuse to protect, support and assist children;
- guidelines with respect to record keeping and confidentiality;
- policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards (including the Victorian Child Safe Standards); and
- a system for continuous improvement and review.

As a part of Mentone Girls' Grammar School's induction process, all staff and Direct Contact Volunteers are required to complete a selection of training modules on the content of our Child Protection Program.

All staff, Direct Contact Volunteers and members of Mentone Girls' Grammar School Council, the Mentone Girls' Grammar School Foundation, and members of School Governance Committees are provided with additional, ongoing child protection training.

Staff, volunteers (direct and indirect), third party contractors and external education providers are supported by the Mentone Girls' Grammar School's Child Protection Officers: the **Vice Principal (Wellbeing)/ Head of Senior School, the Head of Junior School and the Senior Vice Principal** to ensure that they are compliant with the School's approach to child protection.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Child protection is everyone's responsibility. At Mentone Girls' Grammar School all members of the Mentone Girls' Grammar School Council, the Mentone Girls' Grammar School Foundation, and members of School Governance Committees and staff, as well as direct and indirect volunteers, have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children. Specific responsibilities include:

School Council

Each member of the Mentone Girls' Grammar School Council is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to allow Mentone Girls' Grammar School's Child Protection and Safety Policy and the Child Protection Program to be effectively implemented within the School and are responsible for holding the Principal and Strategic Management Team accountable for effective implementation.

The Principal

The Principal is responsible, and will be accountable for, taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Protection and Safety Policy and the School's Child Protection Program are implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child protection culture is maintained within the School.

School Child Protection Officers

A number of senior staff members are nominated as Mentone Girls' Grammar School's Child Protection Officers. Our Child Protection Officers, the Vice Principal (Wellbeing)/Head of Senior School, Head of Junior School and the Senior Vice Principal receive additional specialised training with respect to child protection issues.

They are the first point of contact for raising child protection concerns within the School. They are also responsible for championing child protection within Mentone Girls' Grammar School and assisting in co-ordinating responses to child protection incidents.

Staff Members

All staff are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with either the Vice Principal (Wellbeing)/Head of Senior School, Head of Junior School or the Senior Vice Principal.

Direct Contact Volunteers

All Direct Contact Volunteers, as defined in this policy, are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Code of Conduct and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse.

It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the School's Child Protection Officers, either the Vice Principal (Wellbeing)/Head of Senior School, Head of Junior School or the Senior Vice Principal.

Indirect Contact Volunteers

Indirect Contact Volunteers (or 'indirect volunteers') are those volunteers who are involved in providing support and services whilst not directly assisting a specific group of students. Indirect contact volunteers are not responsible for supervising students and would not have 'unsupervised' contact with students during the normal course of providing the volunteer service.

All indirect volunteers are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment.

All indirect volunteers are required by the School to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program.

Examples of Indirect Contact Volunteer activities may include assisting with School functions, or the School canteen and fundraising barbecues.

Third Party Contractors

All Third Party Contractors (service providers) engaged by the School are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment.

All service providers engaged by the School are required by the School to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program.

The School may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the service provider.

Direct Contact Contractors

Direct Contact Contractors are:

- those who have direct contact**with students during the normal course of their work, those who may be in a position to establish a relationship of trust with a student notwithstanding that unsupervised access to students would be rare (for example, full-time maintenance personnel); and
- any contractors whom a school is legally required to screen.

Indirect Contact Contractors

Indirect Contact Contractors are those contractors who do not meet the definition of "Direct Contact Contractor". Please refer to the section on Third Party Suppliers (above).

External Education Providers

An external education provider is any individual or organisation that Mentone Girls' Grammar School has arranged to deliver a specified course of study that is part of the curriculum, to a student or students enrolled at Mentone Girls' Grammar School. The delivery of such a course may take place on School premises or elsewhere. All external education providers engaged by the School are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the School environment.

All external education providers engaged by the School are required by the School to be familiar with our Child Protection and Safety Policy and our Child Protection Program. The School may include this requirement in the written agreement between it and the external education provider.

The Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic) defines 'direct contact' as any contact between a person and a child (aged under 18) that involves:

- physical contact; or
- face to face contact; or
- contact by post or other written communication; or
- contact by telephone or other oral communication; or
- contact by email or other electronic communication.

Working With Children Check Requirements

All teachers and early childhood teachers registered with VIT must notify Working with Children Check Victoria (WWC Check) of any child-related work they do outside of their teaching in a school or early childhood service, regardless of whether it is paid or voluntary work. If a teacher's VIT registration is suspended or cancelled, WWCCV may notify the relevant organisations that the teacher exemption no longer applies.

A registered teacher who does child-related work, other than teaching in a school or early childhood service, must notify WWC Check of this work by completing the Teacher notification form.

Teachers registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) must:

- inform Working With Children Check Victoria (WWC Check) of any other child-related work you do.
- notify WWC Check within 21 days of starting any new child-related work.

VIT will pass information you give us now on to WWCCV.

VIT will also inform your contact at your added organisation that you named them.

Please note, if your teacher registration is suspended or cancelled, WWC Check may inform your organisation(s) you're no longer exempt from a WWC Check.

Visitors to Mentone Girls' Grammar School, whether they be contractors, volunteers or education providers, must be able to produce a current WWC Check at Reception to enter our campus. Exemptions to this requirement apply if the person is:

- a. A parent volunteering in an activity in which their child participates, or normally participates.
- b. A teacher with current VIT registration.
- c. An officer with either the Victoria Police or Australian Federal Police.
- d. An interstate visitor with a current WWC card from another state (interstate visitors can do child-related work in Victoria without a Victorian Check for a period of up to 30 days in the same calendar year).

REPORTING CONCERNS

The CYFA (Commission for Children and Young People) states that any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is at risk of harm should report their concerns to DHHS Child Protection.

If you are not a Mandatory Reporter, you still have the option of making a report to DHHS Child Protection under the CYFA if you believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection.

For those individuals who are not School Staff, such as third party contractors, external education providers, indirect contact volunteers (mandated or non-mandated) concerns should be reported to one of the school's Child Protection officers (see below) for consultation and action. Whilst this group of individuals can report directly to DHHS, the School would appreciate consultation with them prior to that course of action being taken.

Mrs Joanne Frost

Vice Principal (Wellbeing)/Head of Senior School
Telephone: 9581 1203
email: jfrost@mentonegirls.vic.edu.au

Mrs Kellie Morgan

Head of Junior School
Telephone: 9581 1225
email: kmorgan@mentonegirls.vic.edu.au

Mrs Kay McCullough

Senior Vice Principal
Telephone: 9581 1256
email: kmccullough@mentonegirls.vic.edu.au

Communications will be treated confidentially on a 'need to know' basis.

Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger, the Police should be called on 000.

RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Code of Conduct
- Risk Management Program
- Compliance Program
- Human Resources Program
- Student Duty of Care Program
- Occupational Health & Safety Program
- Child Protection Staff Training
- Recruitment & Selection Procedure
- Social Media Policy - Staff
- Professional Boundaries Policy
- Induction Procedures

POLICY AND PROGRAM REVIEW

The School is committed to the continuous improvement of our Child Protection program. The program is regularly reviewed for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child protection related laws, regulations and standards.

Our School Child Safety Code of Conduct

RATIONALE

A Child Safety Code of Conduct lists behaviours that are acceptable and those that are unacceptable. It provides a high-level statement of professional boundaries, ethical behaviour and acceptable and unacceptable relationships. For more detailed guidance, refer to the Mentone Girls' Grammar School **Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Policy**.

When individuals are clear about behavioural expectations, they are much more likely to act appropriately with each other and with children. When everyone is educated about the Code of Conduct and the reasons it is so important to uphold, the School environment becomes much more transparent and people are accountable for their behaviour. Above all, a Child Safety Code of Conduct helps to protect children from harm.

This Child Safety Code of Conduct outlines appropriate standards of behaviour for all adults towards students. The Code serves to protect students, reduce any opportunities for abuse or harm to occur, and promote child safety in the Mentone Girls' Grammar School environment. It provides guidance on how to best support students and how to avoid or better manage difficult situations. Where a staff member breaches the Code, Mentone Girls' Grammar School may take disciplinary action, including in the case of serious breaches, summary dismissal. The School revises the Code annually.

Mentone Girls' Grammar School has the following expectations of behaviours and boundaries for all adults interacting with students within our School community. This includes all teaching staff, non-teaching staff, members of the Mentone Girls' Grammar School Council, Mentone Girls' Grammar School Foundation and Governance Committees, volunteers (direct and indirect), third party contractors, external education providers and parents/carers.

The School's School Council has endorsed this Child Safety Code of Conduct.

The Child Protection Code of Conduct applies to:

- all staff members, including non-teaching staff and temporary or casual staff;
- volunteers;
- students;
- parents and carers;
- Third Party Contractors and service providers (including External Education Providers);
- members/directors of the School Council;
- teaching students on placement at the School; and
- visitors.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct set out below is designed to stand alone. It can also be incorporated in whole or part into broader Codes of Conduct that are developed within the School, including other professional or occupational codes of conduct that regulate particular staff at the School.

The Code is made available to all staff, volunteers, families and students via our public website and staff intranet. A PDF version of our Child Safety Code of Conduct is also available.

DO:

- Behave as a positive role model to students.
- Promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of students.
- Be vigilant and proactive with regard to student safety and child protection issues.
- Provide age appropriate supervision for students.
- Comply with guidelines published by the School with respect to child protection.
- Treat all students with respect.
- Promote the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability.
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of linguistically and culturally diverse students.
- Use positive and affirming language towards students.
- Encourage students to 'have a say' and then listen to them with respect.
- Respect cultural, religious and political differences.
- Help provide an open, safe and supportive environment for all students to interact, and socialise.
- Intervene when students are engaging in inappropriate bullying behaviour towards others or acting in a humiliating or vilifying way.
- Report any breaches of this Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- Report concerns about child safety to one of Mentone Girls' Grammar School's Child Protection Officers and ensure that your legal obligations to report allegations externally are met.
- Where an allegation of child abuse is made, ensure as quickly as possible that the student involved is safe.
- Call the Police on 000 if you have immediate concerns for a student's safety.
- Respect the privacy of students and their families and only disclose information to people who have a need to know.

DO NOT:

- Engage in any form of inappropriate behaviour towards students or expose students to such behaviour.
- Use prejudice, oppressive behaviour or inappropriate language with students.
- Express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of students or discriminate against any student based on culture, race, ethnicity or disability.
- Engage in open discussions of an adult nature in the presence of students.
- Engage in any form of sexual conduct with a student including making sexually suggestive comments and sharing sexually suggestive material.
- Engage in inappropriate or unnecessary physical conduct or behaviours including doing things of a personal nature that a student can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes.
- Engage in any form of physical violence towards a student including inappropriately rough physical play.
- Use physical means or corporal punishment to discipline or control a student.
- Engage in any form of behaviour that has the potential to cause a student serious emotional or psychological harm.
- Develop 'special' relationships with students that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific students).
- Engage in undisclosed private meetings with a student that is not your own child.
- Engage in meetings with a child that is not your own, outside of school hours and without permission from the School and the child's parent.
- Engage in inappropriate personal communications with a student through any medium, including any online contact or interactions with a student.
- Take or publish (including online) photos, movies or recordings of a student without parental/carer consent.
- Post online any information about a student that may identify them such as their: full name, age, email address, telephone number, residence, school, or details of a club or group they may attend.
- Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse.

Staff and Student Professional Boundaries

Mentone Girls' Grammar School staff hold a unique position of influence, authority, trust and power in relation to students at the School. As such, it is their duty, at all times, to maintain professional boundaries with students. The practice of protective behaviours at all times will also reduce the possibility of vexatious claims being brought against staff.

This policy applies to all teaching staff, non-teaching staff, School Council, School Foundation and Governance Committee members, volunteers, Third Party Contractors and external education providers (together, known as "staff" for the purposes of this policy only).

Mentone Girls' Grammar School's Policy

Mentone Girls' Grammar School is committed to providing a safe physical, virtual and emotional environment where all of our students are respected and treated with dignity in an appropriate professional and caring manner where the risk of child abuse is minimised, and a safe and supportive child safe environment is maintained. It is our policy that:

- staff exercise their responsibilities in a way that recognises professional boundaries with regard to their relationships with students at all times;
- staff identify, discourage and reject any advances of a sexual nature initiated by a student;
- staff interaction with students is professional at all times, including inside and outside of school hours;
- conflict of interest issues must be reported to the Principal as soon as practicable;
- equal learning opportunities are given to each student without discrimination; and
- appropriate consequences will be applied to staff who breach professional boundaries.

The Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) includes many offences involving a child under the care, supervision or authority of a person. Many staff members will be in a position of care, supervision or authority over a student. All members of the School community must be aware that conduct that breaches professional boundaries may amount to a criminal offence.

Professional Boundaries

Professional boundaries are parameters that describe the limits of a relationship in circumstances where one person (a student) entrusts their welfare and safety to another person (a staff member), in circumstances where a power imbalance exists.

The fact that School staff are in a unique position of trust, care, authority and influence with students means that there is always an inherent power imbalance that exists between them. It also means that professional

boundaries must be established, maintained and respected at all times. In most cases this power imbalance is clear; however sometimes it may be more difficult to recognise especially for younger staff members who may only be a few years older than their students.

The following guidelines are not exhaustive, and given that sometimes "grey areas" may occur, it is expected that all staff (no matter their age or experience) use their own good judgment, think very carefully about the implications and potential consequences of engaging in certain behaviours with students, and always err on the side of caution. When unsure about whether professional boundaries are being, or have been, breached, ask yourself:

- Would I modify my behaviour if a colleague was present?
- How would I feel about explaining my actions at a staff meeting?
- Am I sharing information for the student's benefit, or for my benefit?
- Am I dealing with this student differently from others in similar circumstances?
- Is my language or demeanor different from normal when dealing with this particular student?

Intimate Relationships

Staff must not initiate or develop a relationship with any student that is or can be misinterpreted as having a romantic or sexual, rather than professional basis. This is regardless of whether the relationship is consensual, non-consensual or condoned by parents/carers. Such relationships have a negative impact on the teaching and learning of students and colleagues, and may carry a serious reputational risk for the staff member and, in turn, the School.

Staff should also be aware that developing or encouraging romantic or sexual relationships with recent former students (over 18 years of age) may violate professional boundaries and are strongly discouraged from doing so.

The imbalance of power and authority that exists in the staff/student relationship does not suddenly disappear after the student finishes their schooling. Staff should not assume that they will be protected from disciplinary action by claiming that a relationship began only after the student left the School as there may be a reasonable belief that the emotional intimacy of the relationship developed while the staff/student relationship existed.

The VIT Code of Conduct Principle 1.5 - A professional relationship will be violated if a teacher:

- a sexual relationship with a learner;

- uses sexual innuendo or inappropriate language and/or material with learners;
- touches a learner without a valid reason;
- flirtatious behaviour or dating;
- development of an intimate personal relationship;
- sexual relations;
- the use of sexual innuendo, inappropriate language and/or material with students;
- unwarranted and inappropriate touching;
- unwarranted and inappropriate filming or photography;
- deliberate exposure to sexual behaviour of others (eg. pornography);
- having intimate contact without a valid context via written or electronic means (eg. email, letters, telephone, text messages, social media sites or chatrooms);
- going out, whether alone or in company, to social events such as the movies or dinner;
- exchanging gifts of a personal nature that encourages the formation of an intimate relationship.

Personal Relationships

Staff must not initiate or develop a relationship with any student that is or can be perceived or misinterpreted as having a personal rather than professional element. This is regardless of whether the relationship is consensual, non-consensual or condoned by parents or carers.

It is the student's perception of staff behaviour and not the intention of the staff member that is important.

An established and expected professional relationship between staff and students may be compromised by staff:

- attending parties or socialising with students outside of organised School events (without parental/carer permission);
- sharing personal details about their private lives with students; or
- meeting with students outside of school hours without permission from the School.

Staff must recognise at all times that their role is not to be a 'friend' or 'parent' to a student.

The VIT Code of Conduct under Principle 1.5 states - A professional relationship may be compromised if a teacher:

- attends parties or socialises with learners;
- invites a learner or learners back to their home, particularly if no-one else is present.

Fair Learning Opportunities

The main focus of teaching is effective student learning and as such, teachers are expected to support their students with their professional expertise so as to offer them the best education in their individual circumstances. The quality of teaching and learning between teachers and students characterises their relationship. Teachers should demonstrate their commitment to student learning by:

- maintaining a safe and challenging learning environment that promotes mutual respect;
- recognising and developing each student's abilities, skills and talents by catering to their individual abilities and respecting their individual differences;
- encouraging students to develop and reflect on their own values;
- interacting with students without bias;
- not engaging in preferential treatment;
- not discriminating against any student on the basis of race, sex, sexuality, disability or religious or political conviction; and
- always making decisions in students' best interests.

Social Media - Electronic Communications between Staff and Students

Please ensure this section is read in conjunction with the School's Social Media Policy, Video and Photography Policy and Staff Code of Conduct.

The School provides an intranet which must be used for all communications with students and their families within the context of a professional teaching relationship, whether at school or not.

It is expected that all staff at the School will adhere to the following guidelines.

- all use of technology should be for educational purposes or for the organisation of co-curricular activities;
- all email communication between staff and students should be via the School email system and reflect a professional staff/student relationship;
- staff should not communicate with students via text messages where it is not in a professional context;
- staff should not give out their personal social media contact details;

- staff should not give out their personal telephone numbers, except as a safety strategy during an excursion and they must instruct students to delete that number from their contacts at the end of the excursion;
- staff are not to accept or request students as 'friends' on social media or otherwise use social media to communicate in any way that is not condoned or approved by the School;
- staff should not exchange personal pictures with a student;
- teachers are not expected or encouraged to respond to concerns of parents/carers or students on holidays, weekends or in the evening;
- any student personal contact numbers or other personal contact details made available to the School should only be used for School communications.

The VIT Code of Conduct Principle 1.5 - A professional relationship will be violated if a teacher:

- holds conversations of a personal nature or has contact with the learner via written/electronic means (including email, letters, telephone, text messages or chat lines) without a valid context.

Physical Contact with Students

All staff should be aware that situations may arise that can be perceived in a manner that was not intended. For this reason, all staff at the School should adhere to the following guidelines for contact with students both in and outside of School grounds:

- staff should avoid unnecessary physical contact with students;
- minimal, non-lingering, non-gratuitous physical contact in the context of the situation is acceptable (e.g. congratulatory pat on the back or handshake); and
- contact for sport, drama and dance instruction is acceptable in a class situation but not in a 1:1 situation. If physical contact is required for specific technical instructions, it must be brief and only with the consent of the student. Note that a student may withdraw consent for this contact either verbally or gesturally and staff must remain vigilant whilst engaging in necessary contact situations. Once consent has been withdrawn no further contact can be or should be made.

Off-Campus Excursions and Camps

During off-campus excursions or camps, the same physical contact guidelines apply as well as the following:

- checking of sleeping arrangements, or supervising of students changing should be done, where possible, with another staff member present and always in a manner that respects students' privacy and personal space;
- always knock and advise of presence prior to entering a bedroom or dormitory; and
- ensure that while in a bedroom or dormitory a strict staff/student relationship is upheld and that inappropriate behaviour is not undertaken.

Managing Conflicts of Interest

Where personal relationships with students such as family relationships and close friendship networks exist, questions of conflicts of interest may arise.

This may be more prevalent in close or rural communities where professional boundaries may be tested due to the nature and size of the community. In these circumstances, staff need to be far more diligent in developing and maintaining these boundaries.

Where a staff member feels that a conflict of interest may exist, they should notify the Principal, or the Chair of the Council if the conflict involves the Principal, and arrangements should be implemented to avoid the conflict situation if possible. For example, the teaching of students by a staff member with a conflict should be avoided.

Any significant decisions relating to these students in the School (such as the appointment of classes or selection in sports teams) should be referred to another staff member and endorsed by a supervisor.

The VIT Code of Conduct Principle 1.5 - A professional relationship will be violated if a teacher:

- accepts gifts which could be reasonably perceived as being used to influence them, from learners or their parents/carers.

Disclosure of Staff/Student Interactions

It is Mentone Girls' Grammar School's policy that all staff are encouraged to declare any interactions with students outside school hours. These interactions may include instances where the staff member is:

- related to the student;
- friends with the student's parents or family; or
- given parental consent to interact with the student for academic purposes outside of school hours and has notified the School.

Mentone Girls' Grammar School maintains records of all declarations made by staff members related to their interactions with students, or relationships with students, that exist outside of school hours or School premises.

These records are kept for a period of seven years.

Staff Responsibilities

Boundaries are not always clear. There are 'grey areas'. Actions often have the potential to be perceived by others in unintended ways. You have the power. It is ultimately your responsibility not to misuse it. If in doubt, err on the side of caution.

All staff must:

- follow the guidelines as set out in this policy;
- immediately report any conflicts of interest;
- remove themselves from decision making where a conflict has been identified
- adhere to all related policies, particularly Child Protection Policies, Grooming Policy, Social Media Policy, Photography and Video Policy;
- use good judgement when dealing with students;
- think very carefully of the implications and potential consequences of engaging in certain behaviours with students.

If in Doubt:

Adults should ask themselves:

- Would I modify my behaviour if a colleague was present?
- How would I feel about explaining my actions at a staff meeting?
- Am I sharing information for the student's benefit or for my benefit?
- Am I dealing with this student differently from others in similar circumstances?
- Is my language or demeanour different from normal when dealing with this particular student?

Non-Compliance

Professional boundary violations by a staff member represent a breach of trust, a failure to meet a duty of care owed to students, and a failure to follow the Child Safe Code of Conduct and behaviour requirements of the School.

A breach of the School's Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Policy by a staff member may result in disciplinary action, including in the case of serious breaches, summary dismissal. A breach may also constitute Reportable Conduct.

Where any other member of the School community breaches any obligation, duty or responsibility within this Program, the School may take appropriate action.

Implementation

These guidelines are implemented through a combination of:

- staff training and development in professional conduct;
- student and parent/carer education and information;
- effective management of teachers engaging in inappropriate relationships with students;
- effective management of conflicts of interest;
- effective communication and incident notification procedures;
- effective record keeping procedures; and
- initiation of corrective actions where necessary.



EST. 1899

MENTONE GIRLS' GRAMMAR

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