



# Child Safety and Safeguarding Program

## Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct (Vic)

If you are a non-English speaker who needs help to understand this Policy, please contact Edmund Rice Education Australia - Victorian Schools Limited (VSL).

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

St Patrick's College is committed to the safety of all children and has a no tolerance approach to child abuse.

St Patrick's College is a Catholic day and boarding college for boys in the Edmund Rice tradition, established in 1893. St Patrick's College is committed to providing a caring, supportive, and safe environment where every student has a place, a voice and their story is known.

This Code has been drafted in consultation with the College's School-Based Staff members and parents/guardians of the students and endorsed by The EREA VSL Board. It has been drafted taking into account the diversity of the College environment, including but not limited to students who self-identify or are identified by School-Based Staff or School Boarding Premises Staff as a member of a vulnerable cohort (for example, Aboriginal children and students; children and students with disability; children and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; children and students who are unable to live at home or are in out of-home care; international students; and children and students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTQIA+)).

## 1.2 Purpose

This Code has the objective of promoting child safety and wellbeing in the College environment and safeguarding students of the College against sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse or neglect. It aligns with the College's stance of no tolerance for child abuse.

This Code should be read in conjunction with the EREA VSL Code of Conduct and the College's Child Safeguarding Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures.

It is intended to take into account the needs of all children and students, complement child protection legislation, College policies in relation to child safety, mandatory reporting and other reporting requirements, and is consistent with any relevant professional or occupational codes of conduct, including but not limited to the Victorian Institute of Teaching (**VIT**) Codes of Conduct as these apply to School-Based Staff and personnel.

## 1.3 Scope

This Code applies to all EREA Victorian Schools Ltd. (EREA VSL) **School-Based Staff and Volunteers**, including but not limited to College Advisory Council members, all employed Staff (including teachers, administration and education support Staff, tertiary placement students, School Boarding Premises Staff, and temporary or casual staff), pre-service teachers, Volunteers, Contractors (including External Education Providers), and clergy.

It applies to all aspects of their engagement with the College and its students, including students aged 18 and over.

All School-Based Staff and Volunteers must be conscious that their position places significant obligations on them including a requirement to maintain professional boundaries. Interactions with students can extend beyond the College setting, including outside of school hours, outside of College grounds and by any medium of technology (including social media).

This Code applies regardless of:

- the location of where an interaction occurs, whether during or outside College grounds, during or outside school hours or in physical, online or virtual places
- a student's age
- a student's consent

- the consent of parents/guardians and families; and
- circumstances in which a student initiates an interaction or relationship between a School-Based Staff member or Volunteer and the student.

This Code does not apply to students and parents/guardians, except where parents/guardians are Volunteers. Required standards of behaviour for these groups are set out in the Student Code of Conduct and Parent Code of Conduct.

## 2. Roles and Responsibilities

All School-Based Staff and Volunteers are responsible for understanding their obligations under this Code and complying with the provisions of this Code as updated from time to time.

This Code has been endorsed by The EREA VSL Board as the College's governing authority. The EREA VSL Board is responsible for developing and reviewing this Code to ensure compliance.

The EREA VSL Board has delegated authority to the Principal to implement this Code. This includes ensuring that all School-Based Staff and Volunteers are aware of this Code and acknowledge in writing or online/electronically that they have read, agree to adhere to and understand the Code. The Principal will ensure that the Code is publicly available on the College's website, and that parents/guardians and students are aware of the Code, including by Complispace-PolicyConnect and Staff Learning Systems, Sam4Schools, Passtab, College Website, Contracts, Newsletters, Annual Reports, Annual briefings and the Crest..

## 3. Acceptable Behaviours

All School-Based Staff and Volunteers must treat all students with respect. They hold a unique position of influence, authority, trust and power in relation to students. As such, it is their duty to establish and maintain professional boundaries with students at all times.

All School-Based Staff and Volunteers are responsible for supporting the safety of children and students by:

- adhering to the College's Child Safeguarding Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures, this Code, EREA VSL's Code of Conduct and the College's other applicable policies and procedures (as amended from time to time) at all times

- taking all reasonable steps to protect the students in the College's care from abuse or harm
- treating everyone in the College community with respect, modelling positive and respectful relationships and acting in a manner that sustains a safe, educational and pastoral environment
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child, student or young person has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child, student or young person
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child's self-identification)
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having no tolerance for discrimination)
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of students with disability (for example, during personal care activities)
- respecting the language, customs, religions and cultures of a student
- ensuring that, as far as practicable, School-Based Staff and Volunteers are not alone with a student unnecessarily or in a manner unrelated to the College or their role
- reporting any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns in accordance with the College's Child Safeguarding Reporting and Responding Obligations Policy and Procedures
- reporting any suspected breach of this Code by any other School-Based Staff member or Volunteer to a Child Safeguarding Officer or the Principal
- understanding and complying with all reporting obligations as they relate to mandatory reporting and reporting under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
- understanding and complying with all obligations as they relate to the Reportable Conduct Scheme including reporting allegations of Reportable Conduct
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that the students are safe
- respecting the confidentiality and privacy of students and acting in accordance with the College's Privacy Program
- exercising prudent judgment and intervention consistent with the College's Student Behaviour Policies and Procedures when students engage in bullying behaviour towards others or act in a humiliating, degrading, intimidating or vilifying way
- only interacting with students online using the College's technology systems, and only for educational purposes or for the organisation of co-curricular events and in compliance with the College's ICT Acceptable Use Policy

- immediately notifying the Principal or the Principal's delegate if they become the subject of any child safety investigation or become charged with any offence related to child safety
- complying with their professional and employment obligations, including any other relevant professional or occupational code of conduct such as the VIT Code of Conduct
- developing and exercising prudent judgment and sensitivity regarding appropriate physical interactions and only engage in physical interactions with students where it may be necessary, a required part of the educative process, beneficial and/or supportive
- complying with any lawful and reasonable direction by the College
- cooperating with any child safety investigation by the College or any regulatory authority

## 4. Unacceptable Behaviours

School-Based Staff and Volunteers must not:

- engage in any form of child abuse, including behaviour that could constitute grooming
- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse
- develop any 'special' relationships with students that could be seen as favouritism, including but not limited to:
  - the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific students
  - attending parties or socialising with students outside of organised College events
  - sharing personal details about their private life with students; and
  - meeting with students outside of College hours without permission from the College
- under any circumstances, enter into an intimate relationship with a student
- exhibit behaviours with students which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example, sitting on laps, massages)
- engage in conduct towards or in the presence of a student that suggests contempt, ridicule or intolerance, including because of the student's or another person's race, culture, religion, gender, sexuality or disability
- subject any student to any form of corporal punishment
- put students at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors)
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with a student or do things of a personal nature that a student can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of students (for example, personal social activities)
- use inappropriate language in the presence of students
- express personal views on culture, race or sexuality in the presence of students

- discriminate against any student, including because of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or disability
- have contact with a student or their family outside of school without College Principal's knowledge, and/or consent of the Principal (for example, unauthorised after-hours tutoring, private instrumental/other lessons or sport coaching). This does **not** include accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street.
- have any online contact with a student (including by social media, email, instant messaging, etc) or their family, unless that contact is limited to providing information about the College, or is connected directly to the schoolwork of the enrolled student
- use any personal communication channels/device such as a personal email account, social media or instant messenger accounts to make contact with students
- exchange personal contact details such as phone numbers, social networking sites or personal email addresses
- drive a student in their car unless they have parental consent
- put themselves in a position where there is a conflict of interest
- become 'friends' with, follow or add a student on any social media platform
- photograph or video a student without the consent of their parents or guardians
- share or request any photographs, videos, recordings or personal information about students without the College's consent, including on any of their own social media platforms
- work with a young person while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- consume alcohol or drugs at College or at College events in the presence of students or supply any student with drugs or alcohol
- supply any student with drugs or alcohol.

## 5. Professional Boundaries

All School-Based Staff and Volunteers must maintain professional boundaries at all times, including outside College hours and activities.

School-Based Staff and Volunteers should be aware that where a relationship develops with an ex-student, EREA VSL and the College are entitled to consider whether the School-Based Staff member or Volunteer's actions suggest/suggested an abuse of their position as a School-Based Staff member or Volunteer including if professional boundaries between the School-Based Staff member or Volunteer and the student were infringed. A judgment that abuse of their position has occurred would constitute serious misconduct and may result in the School-Based Staff member or Volunteer's employment or

engagement being terminated, together with mandated reporting to appropriate child protection agencies.

## 6. Personal Relationships with Students

Where personal relationships with students such as family relationships and close friendship networks exist, questions of conflict of interest may arise and professional boundaries may be tested.

Where such a situation may arise, a School-Based Staff member or Volunteer is expected to:

- be diligent in developing and maintaining professional boundaries
- take steps to ensure that any potential conflict of interest is avoided; and
- comply with the College's policy to make relevant disclosures to the Child Safeguarding Officer and/or the Principal.

## 7. Policy Compliance

### 7.1 Breach of this Policy

EREA VSL and the College take their child safety obligations very seriously.

School-Based Staff and Volunteers that breach this Code may be subject to disciplinary action, including and up to termination of their employment or engagement.

Individuals that are aware of a suspected breach of this Code should refer to the College's Child Safeguarding Reporting and Responding Obligations Policy and Procedures and should make a report to a Child Safeguarding Officer. All reports will be treated seriously and confidentiality.

The College is required to report to the 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.

The College may also be required to report concerns to the Police, Commission for Children and Young People and/or the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH Child Protection).

### 7.2 Policy Review

A review of this Code shall be conducted every two years or earlier if required, such as due to changes in legislation or after any significant child safety incident.

The EREA VSL Board is responsible for ensuring that this Policy is reviewed and updated as needed and endorsing this Policy.

## 8. Related Policies, Procedures and Legislation

### 8.1 College Policy Linkages

This Code should be read in conjunction with the following related documents:

- [Child Safeguarding Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Student Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct](#)
- Parent Code of Conduct
- [Child Safeguarding Reporting and Responding Obligations Policy and Procedures](#)

### 8.2 EREA VSL Policy Linkages

This Code should be read in conjunction with the following related documents:

- TERA Identity and Mission Policy
- EREA VSL Code of Conduct
- EREA VSL Safeguarding Framework

### Other Related Documents

- Catholic Education Multi-Enterprise Agreement 2022
- [VIT Code of Conduct](#)

### Related Legislation and Legislative Instruments

- [Education and Training Reform Act 2006 \(Vic\)](#).
- [Ministerial Order 1359](#)
- [Crimes Act 1958 \(Vic\)](#).



- [Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 \(Vic\)](#)

## Policy Administration

Responsible Officer	EREA VSL Chief Executive Officer
Policy Owner	EREA VSL Director of Safeguarding
Approving Body	EREA VSL Board
Approval Date	February 2024
Risk Rating	High
Date of next review	February 2026
<b>Policy Database Information</b>	
Version	1.0
Related Documents	
Superseded Documents	

## DECLARATION

I confirm that I have been provided with a copy of the above Code of Conduct.

I confirm that I have read and understood the Code and understand that I am required to comply with the Code. I acknowledge that, if I breach the Code, I may be subject to disciplinary action, including termination of my engagement with the College.

Name:

Signature:

Date: