

Damascus College Safeguarding
Children and Young People: Code
of Conduct

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Damascus College Safeguarding Children and Young People: Code of Conduct

1. Preamble

Damascus College Ltd 'the College' is a co-sponsored incorporated ministry of the Parishes of Ballarat and the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea. These Members of Damascus College Ltd are responsible for the appointment of the Directors of the Board of Damascus College Ltd. The Board maintains governance oversight of the College to ensure the school is safe for children and young people.

The Damascus College Board has particular responsibilities for safeguarding children and young people as required by the Ministerial Order No. 870: Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools (MO 870).

This places accountability for managing the risk of child abuse with the Damascus College Board. Consistent with MO 870, the Damascus College Board must have appropriate arrangements to regulate the conduct and decisions of school employees, volunteers and contractors, for the benefit of its students.

In partnership with the family, the Catholic Church and the community, the College endeavours to nurture a relationship with God in Jesus Christ, celebrate and share the Catholic faith, and educate to enable all to make a positive contribution to the world.

2. Purpose

Damascus College is committed to:

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

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

The Code of Conduct has been developed to provide a framework of appropriate and acceptable behaviour expected of all Damascus employees, volunteers and contractors in respect of their duties. The principles contained within the Code of Conduct promote the College educational values.

The Code of Conduct establishes a standard by which all Damascus employees and volunteers:

- conduct themselves toward colleagues, students, parents, employee representatives, contractors, government authorities and the wider college communities
- perform their duties and obligations as directed by the Principal acting as the Board's delegate in the College
- fulfil the mission, ethos, goals and objectives of the College
- promote and exercise fairness and equity

3. Scope

All employees, volunteers, coaches, contractors, clergy, board directors and board sub-committee members at Damascus College 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 safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children and young people, as within the acceptable behaviours below.

The following additional guidance is provided for employees:

This document does not constitute part of an employment contract, but it does affect the obligations of an employee.

The College Board considers that it is important that each staff member of Damascus College is clearly advised of expectations in regard to standards of professional behaviour. With this in mind, employees are requested to read the Code of Conduct, as much as possible, as complementary to other existing guidance.

Where there is any irreconcilable conflict between the expectations of this document and any other guidance, the following documents should be read as superior to this Code of conduct:

- Relevant State or Federal legislation
- Any diocesan Church or Catholic Education Office Policy that specifically encompasses catholic schools
- Any applicable Victorian or National teaching code
- The relevant contract of employment or engagement

The mere provision of additional or higher standards shall not, of themselves, constitute an "irreconcilable conflict".

4. Guiding Principles

The Code of Conduct has been developed to promote the principles laid out in the *Integrity in the Service of the Church*, a document produced by the National Committee for Professional Standards, 2011. A full explanation of the Guiding Principles is contained in the publication: *National Committee for Professional Standards, 2011, "Integrity in the Service of the Church"*, September 2011.

The five Guiding Principles are:

- ***Commitment to Justice and Equity***
- ***Upholding the dignity of all people and their right to respect***
- ***Commitment to safe and supportive relationships***
- ***Reaching out to those who are poor, alienated or marginalised***
- ***Striving for excellence in the performance of their work***

An integral part of fulfilling these guiding principles is an absolute commitment to child safety and adherence to the Child Safe Standards, as outlined in Ministerial Order No. 870.

Child Safe Standards

Standard 1: governance and leadership

- Strong and clear governance arrangements allow leaders to ensure child safety is a focus within their organisation.

Standard 2: clear commitment to child safety

- Demonstrate your commitment to child safety by documenting how your organisation will meet its duty of care and responsibilities.

Standard 3: Code of conduct

- Establish clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children.

Standard 4: human resource practices

- Develop and implement human resource practices that reduce the risk of child abuse occurring within your organisation.

Standard 5: responding and reporting

- All staff and volunteers must understand their role in keeping children safe, including their reporting responsibilities.

Standard 6: risk management and mitigation

- To reduce the likelihood of harm, organisations must think about and define the risks.

Standard 7: empowering children

- Children have a right to be heard and have their concerns and ideas taken seriously.

5. Standards of Behaviour

All employees, volunteers and contractors of Damascus College are expected to uphold appropriate standards of behaviour. The Principal and those in leadership positions are expected to ensure that employees, volunteers and contractors understand their obligation to observe this Code of Conduct and to uphold appropriate standards of behaviour.

5.1 Child Safety - Safeguarding Children and Young People

Central to the mission of Damascus College is an unequivocal commitment to fostering the dignity, self-esteem and integrity of children and young people and providing them with a safe, supportive and enriching environment to develop spiritually, physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially.

Purpose

This Code of Conduct has a specific focus on safeguarding children and young people at Damascus College against behaviour inclusive of online behaviour which places them at risk. This Code of Conduct also provides protection to employees, volunteers and contractors to ensure that they maintain professional relationships at all times inclusive of an online environment.

This standard has a specific focus on safeguarding children and young people at Damascus College against sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse or neglect. It is intended to complement other professional and/or occupational codes.

Acceptable behaviours

All employees, volunteers, coaches, contractors, clergy, board directors and board sub-committee members are responsible for supporting the safety of children in all environments, including an online learning environment by:

- being aware of, and following, all relevant policies, guidelines and instructions with regard to the safety of children and young people – in particular, mandatory reporting obligations
- adhering to the school's child-safe policy and upholding the school's statement of commitment to the safety of children and young people in the strategic directions,

including in an online environment

- taking all reasonable steps to protect children and young people from abuse
- treating everyone in the school community with respect (modelling positive, restorative 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 children and young people, particularly if they are telling you that they or others have been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of others.
- 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 policy towards discrimination)
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, during personal care activities)
- maintaining appropriate professional boundaries around their behaviour towards children and young people
- ensuring as far as practicable that adults are not alone with a child - this includes in an online environment
- holding a current police check, professional registration and/or Working With Children Check (WWCC) card in accordance with applicable legislation
- understanding and complying with all reporting obligations as they relate to mandatory reporting and reporting under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.)
- reporting to the Principal or Board Chair inappropriate conduct or conduct which might reasonably be considered to be a breach of this Code or a breach of criminal law
- reporting to the Police any conduct or concerns which might reasonably be considered to be illegal
 - such reporting would ideally be in conjunction with the Principal or Child Safe Officer or Board Chair but this is not a requirement of this Code
- reporting any allegations of child abuse to the school's leadership or child safety officer
- reporting any child safety concerns to the school's leadership or child safety officer
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that the child(ren)/ young person/young people are safe.

Unacceptable behaviours

All employees, volunteers, coaches, contractors, clergy, board directors and board sub-committee members must not:

- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse
- develop any 'special' relationships with children/young people that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children) or preferential access to employee time in an online learning environment)
- exhibit behaviours with children/young people which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example, inappropriate hugging)
- put children/young people at risk of abuse (for example interacting with students in an unsupervised or one to one online live environment)
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with children/young people or do things of a personal nature that a child/young person can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes/costumes
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children/young people (for example, personal social activities or online activities)
- use inappropriate language (including inappropriate online language) in the presence of children/young people
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence (face to face or

- online) of children/young people
- discriminate against any child or young person, including because of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or disability
- breach professional boundaries around their behaviour towards children or young people outside the school setting. This includes un-monitored communications or interactions
- without a valid context have contact with a child or their family outside of school (face to face or virtual) without the school's leadership or child safety officer's knowledge and/or consent or the school governing authority's approval (for example, unauthorised after-hours tutoring, private instrumental/other lessons or sports coaching), or without a valid context. Accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street, is appropriate.
- have any online contact with a child (including by social media, email, instant messaging etc.) or their family (unless necessary, e.g. by providing families with e-newsletters or assisting students with their schoolwork) without a valid context (e.g. a familial relationship exists)
- without a valid context use any personal communication channels/device such as a personal email account for contact with students
- without a valid context exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking sites or email addresses
- photograph or video a child or young person without the consent of the individual and the parent or guardians (It is recommended that Video Conferences that involve children are not recorded unless the school has express parent/caregiver permission to record, store and use.)
- work with children or young people while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs (face to face or online)
- consume alcohol or drugs at school in the presence of children or young people (face to face or online)
- consume alcohol irresponsibly at school events (face to face or online)

5.2 Workplace Health and Safety

All employees, volunteers and contractors are expected to:

- present for duty (in both face to face or online contexts) in sufficient physical and mental health to be capable of complying with their duty of care to their colleagues and students – this includes being unimpaired by alcohol, medication or drugs
- take reasonable care to ensure their own health and safety at work and avoid adversely affecting the health and safety of others – this includes following any established safety guidelines
- present to work in professional attire that is safe and appropriate to the role or functions of the staff member
- refrain from behaviour which constitutes bullying, discrimination or any form of harassment

5.3 Support the Mission and Reputation of the Church and Damascus College

All employees, volunteers and contractors are expected to:

- respect the moral values and teachings of the Catholic Church and ensure that their public conduct is consistent with that respect
- support the aims, philosophy and Mercy ethos of the school by their conduct and interactions with the school
- respect and comply with all Federal, State and local laws
- conduct themselves in a manner that will not discredit the Church or Damascus College
- act ethically and with integrity at all times

5.4 Professional Conduct

All employees, volunteers and contractors are expected to:

- carry out their duties in a professional, conscientious and timely manner

- communicate (personally, in writing or via electronic communications) with all persons in a manner which is respectful, honest and courteous at all times
- respect the inherent dignity of all persons and maintain a proper regard for their welfare
- manage and declare situations that may give rise to a conflict of interest or the perception of such a conflict
- observe confidentiality in relation to confidential information and disclose such information only to authorised persons
- respect the privacy of personal and sensitive information (except where legal or moral reporting obligations exist)
- refrain from improperly using information gained in the course of their employment for personal or commercial gain for themselves or others
- comply with any lawful and reasonable direction given by the College Principal or Directors and Members of Damascus College Ltd.

6. Leaders

Leaders include Damascus College Ltd Members, Directors, Principal, Deputy Principal, Assistant Principals, Business Manager, Marketing and Development Leader and other employees holding positions of leadership or responsibility in the College.

In addition to the expectations of all Damascus employees, volunteers and contractors outlined in Section 5, **Leaders** have additional responsibilities to:

- set a good example for all persons
- make decisions fairly, impartially and promptly, considering all available information, legislation, policies and procedures
- act expeditiously in response to a complaint from any person
- provide opportunities for employees and volunteers to participate in decisions which affect them
- ensure all persons are treated fairly and equitably
- ensure that employees, volunteers and contractors understand what is expected with regard to the Code of Conduct and how complaints will be managed

7. Non-compliance with the Code of Conduct

Damascus employees, volunteers and contractors are required to comply with this Code of Conduct.

Any person who holds a reasonable, good faith belief that this Code may not have been complied with may raise this matter with the College's Principal in the first instance. If the matter relates to the Principal, it may be referred directly to the Members or Directors of Damascus College Ltd, usually through the Board Chair.

Following an appropriate investigation, non-compliance with this Code may give rise to a range of outcomes, including counselling and/or disciplinary action including suspension or dismissal where appropriate. In the case of employees, the performance management and dispute resolution procedures of the relevant industrial agreement will be honoured (subject to mandatory and professional reporting obligations).

In some cases, non-compliance with the Code may also constitute civil or criminal offences and may result in civil action or criminal prosecution.

All members of the College community also have access to the provisions of the Concerns and Complaints Policy.

8. Related Policies, Procedures and Resources

This Code of Conduct is to be read in conjunction with and is additional to, any other relevant

Policy, Procedure or Guideline. All Damascus employees, volunteers and contractors are required to comply with the provisions of any such document.

Cross-sectoral and Catholic Education Resources:

- National Committee for Professional Standards, 2011, "Integrity in the Service of the Church", September 2011
<http://www.sydneycatholic.org/justice/royalcommission/pdf/Integrity%20in%20Service%20of%20the%20Church%20final%2027032013-v2013.pdf>
- Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM) Policy 2.2: Guidelines Relating to the Employment of Staff <https://www.cem.edu.au/publications-policies/policy/policy-2.2-guidelines-employment-of-staff/>
- Concerns and Complaints Policy <http://www.damascus.vic.edu.au/about-policies>
- Bullying – Staff Policies and Procedures <http://www.damascus.vic.edu.au/about-policies>
- VIT Codes of Conduct and Ethics:
<https://www.vit.vic.edu.au/professional-responsibilities/conduct-and-ethics>
- Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse
- Protect: Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: A Template for all Victorian Schools
- [PROTECT Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- Privacy Compliance Manual (CEVN website):
 - updated by the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) February 2020
 - may be used by schools and systems which are represented by the CECV
- Family and Domestic Violence: A guide to supporting staff (CECV, 2019)

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Review History - 2021

Next Review - 2022

Damascus College Safeguarding Children and Young People: Code of Conduct - Statement of Commitment

I, _____, as an employee, volunteer or contractor of Damascus College, acknowledge and declare that I will abide by the Damascus College Safeguarding Children and Young People: Code of Conduct which I have read and understood.

| Name: | Signature: | Date: |
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Sighted by (Nominated Officer of Damascus College)

| Name: | Position: | Signature: | Date: |
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