



THOMASTOWN  
SECONDARY COLLEGE

**Thomastown Secondary College**

**STAFF  
CODE OF CONDUCT**

## **STATEMENT**

The College's Code of Conduct is a guide that defines the standards of behaviour that all staff are expected to use in their daily interactions with others. It is also a set of principles that any workplace would define as necessary for maintaining a safe and ethical work environment. The College is subject to national and state Acts, Regulations and Ministerial Orders such as the Child Safety Standards. This Code of Conduct supports such legislation and all other Acts related to working in an educational setting with minors. However, the Code of Conduct is not a form of legislation unto itself.

## **RATIONALE**

This Code of Conduct provides a reference point and a clear statement of the standards of appropriate behaviour towards, and in the company of, children, staff and the community in general. This Code of Conduct exists to ensure and maintain integrity, respect, responsibility and accountability as professionals working with young people within an educational setting.

## **AIMS**

- To provide a set of principles to guide staff in their everyday interactions towards, and in the presence of, students, their families, fellow College staff and the broader community
- To ensure staff always act in a caring and compassionate manner and treat all learners and their families equally and impartially
- To support the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of students at the College and as outlined in the College's *Child Safety Policy and Procedures*.
- To ensure that all staff understand the importance of maintaining professional relationships with students both within and beyond the College
- To assist staff to solve ethical dilemmas
- To maintain accountability in the teaching and learning community
- To promote collegiality and collaboration in the workplace
- To maintain and promote individual excellence in the College's teaching and learning community and to hold fellow colleagues and students in high esteem
- To promote and maintain public confidence in the College
- To positively advance the teaching profession.

## **GUIDELINES**

All members of the College's teaching and learning community have a right to feel safe and respected at all times. As such, this Code of Conduct relates to:

- how staff perform their daily duties,
- their behaviour towards students, parents/carers/families and their colleagues in the College
- discrimination and harassment.

There are three main areas that all staff need to consider when working in an educational setting. These include:

1. Professional Conduct
2. Personal Conduct
3. Professional Competence

### **1. Professional Conduct**

Teachers' professional conduct, and that of the staff in general, is characterised by the quality of the relationships staff have with:

- students
- parents / carers, families and their communities
- fellow colleagues.

### **RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS**

**Provide opportunities for all students to experience their own Individual Excellence.**

The main focus of teaching is the learning of those being taught. Teachers demonstrate their commitment to learning by:

- knowing their learners well, respecting individual differences and catering for individual abilities
- maintaining a safe and challenging learning environment
- accepting professional responsibility for the provision of quality teaching
- having high expectations of every learner, and recognising and developing individual's abilities, skills and talents
- considering all viewpoints fairly
- communicating well and appropriately with their learners.

**Treat all students with courtesy and dignity**

All staff should:

- work to create an environment which promotes mutual respect
- model and engage in respectful and impartial language
- protect learners from intimidation, embarrassment, humiliation or harm
- enhance learner autonomy and sense of self-worth, and encourage learners to develop and reflect on their own values

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal students (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal child's self-identification)
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance of discrimination based on race or ethnicity)
- promote the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, modifying work appropriately, liaising with Education Support staff and devising activities that facilitate their participation in the group)
- refrain from discussing students' personal problems in situations where the information will not be treated confidentially
- do not engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities)
- use consequences commensurate with the offence when disciplining learners
- respect a learner's privacy in sensitive matters, such as health or family problems, and only reveal confidential matters, when appropriate, to relevant staff.

That is:

- to prevent or lessen a serious threat to life, health, safety or welfare of a person (including the learner)
- as part of an investigation into unlawful activity
- if the disclosure is required or mandated by law such as in accordance with the Child Safety Standards as specified in Ministerial Order No. 870 (2015)\*
- to prevent a crime or enforce the law.

### **\*Child Safety**

All staff, volunteers, contractors and School Council members of the College are required to observe and comply with the Child Safety Standards as specified in Ministerial Order No. 870 (2015) and as outlined in the College's *Child Safety Policy and Procedures*. This Code of Conduct should therefore always be read in conjunction with the aforementioned Policy at all times.

All staff at the College have a legal responsibility to:

- Take all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- Listen and respond to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling staff that they or another child has been abused and/or are worried about their safety or the safety of another
- Report any allegations or concerns of child abuse to the Principal immediately and ensure any allegation is reported to the police or child protection
- Ensure as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe
- Report any suspected issues of child safety, conflict of interests, criminal or unethical behaviour by another staff member towards students immediately.
- Report any breach of conduct by themselves or others.

## **Know to work within the limits of one's professional expertise**

In fulfilling one's role, staff carry out a wide range of responsibilities and are exposed to a broad range of situations. Staff at the College support the students by knowing their own strengths and the limits of their own professional expertise.

Staff should therefore:

- seek to ensure they have the physical, mental and emotional capacity to carry out their professional responsibilities
- are aware of the role of other professionals and agencies as well as when learners should be referred to them for assistance
- are truthful when making statements about their qualifications and competencies.

## **Maintaining objectivity in daily interactions with students**

In their professional role, teachers do not behave as a friend or parent / carer. In other words, they:

- interact with learners without displaying bias or preference
- always make decisions in all learners' best interests
- do not draw learners into their personal agendas regarding the College or personal issues or views
- do not seek recognition at the expense of professional objectivity and goals.

## **Maintaining a professional relationship with students both in and out of the College grounds**

Staff, and teachers and Principal class especially, hold a unique position of influence and trust that should not be violated or compromised. They exercise their responsibilities in ways that recognise there are limits or boundaries to their relationships with students at the College. The following examples outline some of those limits.

A professional relationship will be violated if a staff member:

- has a sexual relationship with a student
- uses sexual innuendo or inappropriate language and / or material with students
- touches a student without a valid reason
- holds conversations of a personal nature or has contact with a student via written / electronic means (including email, letters, telephone, text messages or chat lines) without a valid context
- accepts gifts, which could be reasonably perceived as being used to influence them, from student or their parents / carers.

**Note:** This professional relationship may be compromised if a staff member:

- attends parties or socialises with students outside of the College
- invites a student or students back to their home, particularly if no-one else is present.

An exception to this, for example, is staff who are also parents of current students.

## **RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS / CARERS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES**

At Thomastown we recognise that our students come from a diverse range of cultural and socio-economic contexts, and seek to work collaboratively with students' families and communities within those contexts. All College staff should therefore be respectful of, and courteous to, parents and carers by:

- considering parents / carers' perspectives when making decisions which have an impact on the education or wellbeing of a student
- communicating and consulting with parents / carers in a timely, understandable and sensitive manner
- taking appropriate action when responding to parental concerns.

## **RELATIONSHIPS WITH COLLEAGUES**

Collegiality is core to our work in the College. Teachers and staff demonstrate collegiality by:

- treating each other with courtesy and respect
- valuing the input of their colleagues
- using appropriate forums for constructive debate on professional matters such as Unit , Faculty and Committee meetings
- sharing expertise and knowledge in a variety of collaborative contexts
- respecting different approaches to teaching
- providing support for each other, particularly those new to the profession
- sharing information relating to the wellbeing of learners
- respecting each other's work spaces
- respecting each other's roles and responsibilities

## **2. Personal Conduct**

It is important to consider that the personal conduct of staff both within and beyond the College has an impact on the professional standing of that staff member, on the College as an organisation that provides a service to the community and on the teaching profession as a whole.

Although there is no definitive boundary between the personal and professional conduct of a teacher, it is expected that teachers will:

- be positive role models in education settings and in the community
- respect the rule of law and provide a positive example in the performance of civil obligations
- not exploit their position for personal or financial gain
- ensure their personal or financial interests do not interfere with the performance of their duties as outlined in the College's Conflict of Interest Policy and procedures
- dress in a conservative manner consistent with working with adolescents
- act with discretion and maintain confidentiality when discussing workplace issues with other colleagues and the community.

### **3. Professional Competence**

As a body of staff working within an educational setting, all staff should value their professionalism as well as set and maintain high standards of competence.

Teachers and staff should be:

- knowledgeable in their areas of expertise
- committed to pursuing their own professional learning, as required
- complete their duties in a responsible, thorough and timely way.

Teachers and staff should also be aware of the legal requirements that pertain to their role. In particular, be aware of their legal responsibilities in relation to:

- discrimination, harassment and vilification of students and other staff
- negligence
- mandatory reporting and child safety
- privacy
- occupational health and safety
- teacher registration (for teaching staff.)

### **LINKS AND APPENDICES (including processes related to this policy)**

Links which are connected with this policy:

- [VIT Code of Conduct](#)

Appendices which are connected with this policy:

- Appendix A: N/A

### **EVALUATION**

This policy will be reviewed annually or more often, if necessary, due to changes in regulations or circumstances.

