



Child Safe Code of Conduct

All staff, parents, Board directors, visiting allied health professionals, volunteers and contractors engaged in child-related or child-connected work at the Learning Co-operative share responsibility for supporting the safety and wellbeing of children.

This responsibility extends to physical environments both on and off site, and to online environments, including the use of school-owned devices, networks and digital communication platforms.

The Learning Co-operative has zero tolerance for child abuse in any form. All allegations, safety concerns, concerning behaviours and suspected abuse will be treated seriously and responded to promptly in accordance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, Ministerial Order 1359, the PROTECT Four Critical Actions for Schools and applicable legislation.

The Learning Co-operative is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children. We recognise and respect Aboriginal culture, identity and connection to Country, and seek to ensure that Aboriginal children feel safe, supported and empowered at all times.

Purpose

This Code of Conduct outlines the Learning Co-operative's expectations for acceptable, concerning and unacceptable behaviour, both online and in person.

The Code applies to all adults engaged in child-related or child-connected work at the Learning Co-operative and is one of the ways the School seeks to protect children and reduce opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur.

The Code should be read together with the School's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, Protecting Children Policy, Complaints and Concerns Policy, relevant procedures and other applicable School policies.

Accountability

All adults covered by this Code are responsible for understanding and complying with its requirements.

Any breach of this Code, or any concerning behaviour, must be reported to the Coordinator or Child Safety Officer regardless of the severity of the concern or whether there is certainty about what has occurred.

Where a person has a concern about the Coordinator or Child Safety Officer, or where a conflict of interest prevents them from acting appropriately, the concern must be raised with another appropriate member of the School Board or dealt with in accordance with the conflict-of-interest arrangements in the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.



Failure to comply with this Code may result in disciplinary action, termination of employment or engagement, and/or referral to Victoria Police, the Social Services Regulator, the Victorian Institute of Teaching, the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency or relevant National Board, or another relevant professional, regulatory or statutory authority.

Nothing in this Code limits any legal obligation to report child safety concerns or suspected abuse to an external authority.

Responsibilities of All Adults

All adults engaged with the Learning Co-operative are responsible for:

- adhering to the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and upholding the Statement of Commitment to Child Safety at all times;
- treating students and families with respect, both within and outside the School environment;
- listening to and responding to the views and concerns of students;
- acting immediately to ensure the safety of a child where an allegation or disclosure is made;
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse or harm;
- maintaining professional boundaries in all interactions, including physical, emotional and digital interactions;
- ensuring interactions with children are, where possible, visible to other adults and occur within sight and hearing of others;
- respecting a child's right to decline contact or interaction and responding appropriately to signs of discomfort;
- encouraging children to participate in decisions that affect them;
- supporting children to raise concerns without fear of punishment or reprisal;
- promoting inclusion, cultural safety and respect for diversity;
- taking a zero-tolerance approach to racism and actively challenging racist behaviour, language and attitudes;
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children and ensuring their identity, culture and connections to community are respected and supported;
- recognising and responding to the additional needs of children who may be more vulnerable, including children with disability or those unable to live at home;
- taking reasonable steps to prevent and respond to harmful behaviours between children;
- understanding and complying with legal obligations and School policies to report child abuse and other child safety concerns, including reporting to external authorities where required;
- challenging inappropriate behaviour by other adults where it is safe to do so; and
- maintaining awareness of and complying with any professional or occupational obligations relevant to their role.

Supervision Expectations

All adults must:

- avoid one-to-one situations with a child who is not their own unless the situation is authorised and appropriately managed;
- remain within sight and hearing of others when supporting children wherever reasonably practicable;



- ensure support provided to children is observable wherever reasonably practicable;
- step in early if behaviour or interactions raise concern;
- only hand over supervision when another adult has clearly agreed to take responsibility;
- respect a child's avoidance of an adult; repeated or unexplained avoidance must be treated as a potential concern and reported;
- be aware of power imbalances and actively minimise these; and
- maintain awareness of children's whereabouts, transitions and boundaries at all times.

Where privacy, dignity, personal care or individual circumstances require an interaction that cannot be observed by another adult, the interaction must be appropriately authorised, proportionate to the child's needs and managed in accordance with relevant School policies and procedures.

Grooming Behaviours

Grooming behaviours may include, but are not limited to:

- targeting specific children for special attention or favouritism;
- offering gifts, rewards or special privileges;
- seeking or creating opportunities for one-on-one contact;
- isolating a child from peers or other adults;
- communicating with a child outside approved channels or without appropriate parent/carers knowledge;
- encouraging secrecy or “special” relationships;
- gradually testing or crossing professional boundaries, including physical, emotional or digital boundaries;
- seeking excessive personal information from a child;
- attempting to make a child dependent on or unusually attached to an adult; and
- encouraging a child to believe that particular behaviour or relationships are secret, special or inappropriate to disclose.

Grooming may occur in person or online and may involve behaviour intended to establish trust, gain access to a child, normalise inappropriate behaviour, create secrecy or reduce a child's ability to recognise or disclose abuse.

All grooming behaviours must be treated as a child safety concern and reported immediately in accordance with the School's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, Protecting Children Policy and applicable legal obligations.

Transport of Students

- Adults must not transport a student alone unless authorised, with parent/carers consent where required, and with another responsible adult aware of the arrangement.
- Informal or unplanned transport of students, such as offering lifts, is not permitted.
- Students must not be transported in ways that place them at risk or outside agreed arrangements.



- Any transport arrangement must be consistent with relevant School policies and risk-management requirements.

Change Rooms, Camps and Sleeping Arrangements

- Adults must respect children's privacy while maintaining appropriate supervision.
- Adults must not share sleeping arrangements with students unless unavoidable, pre-approved and appropriately supervised.
- Adults must announce themselves before entering change rooms or private spaces wherever reasonably practicable.
- Supervision must balance safety with dignity and privacy.
- Adults must maintain appropriate professional boundaries during camps, excursions, overnight activities and other situations where normal school routines or physical boundaries may change.

Toileting and Personal Care

- Adults must not do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves.
- Where support is required, it must be age-appropriate, explained to the child and, where possible, visible to or known by another adult.
- Children's dignity, privacy and consent must be prioritised at all times.
- Personal care must be provided in accordance with the child's individual needs and relevant School procedures.

Physical Contact

- Physical contact must be appropriate, necessary and responsive to the child's needs.
- Contact must respect the child's consent, comfort and developmental stage.
- Unnecessary or inappropriate physical contact must be avoided.
- Physical intervention or restraint must only occur where authorised and legally permitted and must be managed in accordance with relevant School policies and procedures.
- Adults must be alert to signs that a child is uncomfortable with physical contact and respond appropriately.

Digital Conduct and eSafety Expectations

All adults must:

- use school-owned devices and networks only for authorised purposes;
- not access, store or transmit pornographic or sexually explicit material;
- immediately report any exposure to inappropriate material;
- not bypass or interfere with internet filtering or monitoring systems;
- ensure devices are not accessed by unauthorised individuals;
- use only School-approved platforms to communicate with students;
- maintain professional boundaries in all digital communication;
- not provide students access to personal devices;



- not use personal social media or private messaging to establish inappropriate relationships with students;
- ensure devices are securely stored when not in use;
- not take devices off-site without authorisation; and
- report any concerning digital communication, contact or material involving a student.

Concerning and Unacceptable Behaviours

Concerning or unacceptable behaviours include, but are not limited to:

- wearing inappropriate or revealing clothing around children;
- using unreasonable discipline, including physical force or degrading, shaming or belittling language;
- making unrealistic or excessive demands of a child;
- taking photos or videos of students outside authorised purposes;
- providing gifts or favours that are secretive, high value or single out a child;
- developing relationships that could be seen as favouritism or grooming;
- creating situations to be alone with a child without appropriate authorisation or safeguards;
- engaging in unnecessary or inappropriate physical contact;
- disrespecting children's privacy in bathrooms, change rooms or camps;
- performing personal care tasks a child can do independently;
- placing a child at risk, including isolating them, locking doors or leaving them unattended in vehicles;
- ignoring or failing to report concerning behaviour by others;
- exposing children to inappropriate content or materials;
- working with children while under the influence of alcohol or drugs;
- engaging in adult or sexualised conversations in the presence of children;
- using inappropriate language, including sarcastic, discriminatory or degrading language;
- expressing harmful or exclusionary views about race, gender, culture, disability or other protected characteristics;
- discriminating against any child or their family;
- using a position of authority, trust or influence to obtain inappropriate access to or control over a child;
- encouraging secrecy between an adult and child;
- communicating with students through unauthorised channels or in ways that undermine appropriate professional boundaries; and
- failing to comply with applicable professional, occupational or regulatory requirements.

Responding to Concerns and Breaches

Any person who observes, receives or becomes aware of concerning behaviour, a breach of this Code, a disclosure or an allegation of abuse must act promptly.

The priority is always the safety and wellbeing of the child.

Concerns must be reported in accordance with the School's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, Protecting Children Policy and Complaints and Concerns Policy, including any applicable requirements



to report to Victoria Police, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, the Social Services Regulator, the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Ahpra or another relevant authority.

Adults must not investigate allegations themselves unless specifically authorised to do so as part of their role. They must preserve confidentiality, share information only with those who need to know and avoid actions that could compromise a formal investigation.

Where the concern involves a person responsible for receiving or managing the concern, the School's conflict-of-interest arrangements must be followed.

Relationship with Professional and Occupational Codes

Where a person is also subject to a professional, occupational or regulatory code of conduct or code of ethics, they must comply with both this Code and the requirements of their relevant professional or occupational code.

This includes, where applicable:

- the **Victorian Teaching Profession's Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics** for teachers registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT);
- the relevant **Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) National Board Code of Conduct or Code of Ethics** for registered health practitioners, including visiting allied health professionals;
- any applicable professional code of conduct or code of ethics applying to other regulated or registered professionals; and
- any other professional, occupational or regulatory requirements relevant to a person's role at the Learning Co-operative.

This Code operates alongside, and is to be read consistently with, applicable professional and occupational codes. It does not replace or limit a person's obligations under their professional or occupational registration, code of conduct, code of ethics, employment obligations or applicable legislation.

Where a professional or occupational code imposes a higher or more specific standard of conduct than this Code, the person is expected to comply with that higher or more specific professional requirement.

All professionals engaged by the Learning Co-operative are expected to maintain any professional registration, accreditation or authorisation required for their role and to advise the School if their registration, endorsement, accreditation or right to practise is suspended, cancelled, restricted or otherwise affected in a way that may affect their work with children.

Where an allegation or concern relates to the professional conduct of a person engaged by the School, the Learning Co-operative may refer the matter to the relevant professional or regulatory body where required or appropriate, in addition to taking action under this Code, the School's policies and applicable law.



Final Statement

All adults have a responsibility to actively contribute to a child-safe environment.

This includes maintaining professional boundaries, respecting children's rights and voices, promoting cultural safety and inclusion, acting on concerns, complying with relevant professional and legal obligations, and prioritising the safety, wellbeing and rights of all children at all times.

At induction and engagement, relevant staff, contractors, volunteers and professionals will be informed of their obligations under this Code and, where applicable, their professional or occupational code of conduct or code of ethics.