

Y Whittlesea

Y Community School - Child Safe Code of Conduct

At the Y we believe in the power of inspired young people and the vision of the Y is to build a better world with and for young people.

The Y Community School has been established to respond to the needs of young people who are disengaged or at significant risk of disengaging from mainstream education.

We enact our belief in the power of inspired young people by providing a safe and supportive environment for them to engage with education, attain skills and qualifications and begin not just to survive, but to thrive, become inspired, and an inspiration to others.

1. Purpose:

The Child Safe Code of Conduct expresses the Y Community School's commitment to being a Child Safe Organisation and sets out the expected behaviours of adults towards our students and other children and young people at the school.

2. Scope:

This Child Safe Code of Conduct applies to all adults involved with the school including school and Y Whittlesea staff, volunteers, Board members, contractors and all other adults involved in child related work at the school.

The code applies to both physical and online environments and any environment where a school activity or event is taking place.

3. Commitment to child safety:

The Y Whittlesea and Y Community School are committed to ensuring a culture of child safety and wellbeing and implementing the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

We will ensure all our people know and meet their responsibilities, and that our environments, both physical and online are safe, welcoming and promote wellbeing.

We will take all practicable actions to remove or reduce the risk of child abuse or harm in all the physical and online environments in which the school operates.

We are committed to ensuring that children and young people at our school are provided with a safe and nurturing environment, are welcomed regardless of their individual circumstances and characteristics, are empowered to contribute to a culture of child safety at the school, to speak up and to seek assistance for matters impacting them both within and outside the school environment.

We will support families and community members to engage with our school and contribute to the culture of child safety and wellbeing.

4. Child abuse and harm:

The definitions below are taken from the Commission for Children and Young people. They underpin the understanding of child safety and prevention of harm to children at our school.

Child abuse can be defined in many ways. The term is often used broadly to cover behaviour by people in a position of responsibility, trust or power that results in a child being harmed physically or emotionally.

The Child Safe Standards use a particular definition of 'child abuse' from the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) which includes:

- a sexual offence committed against a child,
- grooming for sexual conduct with a child under the age of 16 under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) • physical violence against a child,
- causing serious emotional or psychological harm to a child,
- serious neglect of a child.

This definition of child abuse is deliberately broad. It allows for a wide range of harmful behaviour and conduct towards a child to be covered by the definition, even if it is not expressly listed.

'Harm' is damage to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child, including as a result of abuse by adults or the conduct of other children. It includes physical, sexual, emotional and psychological harm. Harm can arise from a

single act or event. It can also be cumulative, that is, arising as a result of a series of acts or events over a period of time.

5. Expected & acceptable behaviours:

All adults including staff, volunteers, contractors, board members and other adults involved with children at the school in any way are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

- Upholding the Y Community School and Y Whittlesea's commitment to child safety, adhering to our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and complying with the YCS Safeguarding Procedure at all times.
- Treating students and families in our school community with respect and dignity both within and outside our school environment as part of normal social and community activities.
- Listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they tell you that they or another child or student has been abused or they are worried about their safety, or the safety of another child or student.
- Ensuring the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students or young people at the school who are:
 - of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background,
 - from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds,
 - impacted by disability whether formally diagnosed or not,
 - unable to live at home,
 - lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender or intersex.
- Ensuring, as far as practicable, that adults are not alone with a student. One-to-one interactions between an adult and a student are to be in an open space or in line of sight of another adult, unless their role requires privacy, such as a school counsellor or psychologist.
- Ensuring that any conversations with a student about sex or sexuality occur in a respectful and safe way and in the context of their experience and the staff member's role.
- Reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to one of the schools child safety officers – the Principal, Campus Principal or Wellbeing Leader.
- Understanding and complying with all reporting and disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) in line with our YCS Safeguarding Procedure; see [FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf \(education.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf)
- If child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from further harm.
- Actively engaging with the school leadership and other staff to contribute to a culture that values child safety and takes all practicable measures to ensure our students and other children and young people are safe.
- Taking responsibility to identify any risks to child safety they observe and report any concerns to one of the school's child safety officers.

Staff at our school hold a position of influence and trust that must not be violated or compromised. This is particularly important to recognise when supporting students who may have experienced trauma, neglect or abuse in their earlier lives and have difficulty forming trusting relationships with adults. It is critical that staff exercise their responsibilities recognising the influence and trust they hold with students, recognise there are limits or boundaries to their relationships with children and young people and carefully and sensitively work within those boundaries at all times.

6. Unacceptable behaviours

All staff, volunteers, contractors, other service providers, Board members and any other adults involved in child-connected work in order to support and promote the safety of children must not:

- Ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse or harm.
- Minimise the concerns or potential impacts of any complaints or disclosures or in any other way minimise the potential risks of harm to children.
- Develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming' behaviour (for example, by offering gifts).
- Display behaviours or engage with students in ways that are not justified by the educational, therapeutic or professional context.
- Ignore any adult's overly familiar or inappropriate behaviour towards a student or other child or young person.
- Discuss intimate topics or use sexualised language. Note: when required for educational or support reasons any conversations of a sexual nature with individuals or groups of students must:
 - Have a legitimate and verifiable purpose that is either educational or in support of the student's safety and wellbeing.
 - Use professional language and terminology on the part of the adult(s) involved.

- Be undertaken in a way that ensures students are aware of the purpose, consent to the conversation and are empowered to end the conversation and seek support as required.
- Unless absolutely necessary (e.g. in a counselling situation) should not occur in a 1:1 situation.
- Other than when this is a lesson as part of the school's curriculum, such conversations must be documented in the student's file notes as soon as practicable after the conversation has occurred.
- Treat a child or student unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity.
- Communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels, (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc.) except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to schoolwork or extra-curricular activities or where there is a safety or significant wellbeing concern or other urgent matter.
- Photograph or video a child or student in a school environment except in accordance with the Y Whittlesea's policies or where required for duty of care purposes. Photographing or videoing requires the school to obtain consent before taking and publishing photos of a student. This applies every time a photo is taken. The same requirement applies for excursions and school activities and in online environments.
- Consume alcohol at school events where children or students are present or take or possess illicit drugs in the school environment or at any school event.
- Have contact with any student outside of school hours except with the explicit approval of the principal and parents/guardians/carers. Such contact must be directly related to school-auspiced activities or a legitimate community activity.

Any adult or other staff member who observes unacceptable behaviours on the part of another adult at the school must make a report to one of the school's child safety officers.

7. Internal and external reporting obligations:

All instances of child abuse whether actual or suspected must be reported.

Staff are required to report all incidents to one of the school's child safety officers and through the Y Whittlesea's Y MAC system. Depending on the circumstances there may also be obligations to report to external agencies including the Police, the department of Families Fairness and Housing (DFFH) - Child Protection, the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) and the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT), or other professional bodies where relevant.

The YCS Safeguarding Procedure provides detailed advice on the reporting requirements relating to child safety and potential child abuse.

In all instances staff, volunteers and other adults at the school must report any suspicions, concerns or disclosures to one of the school's child safety officers. Wherever possible this should be the first line of reporting and the child safety officer will then be able to support staff with all other reporting requirements.

8. Breaches of code of conduct:

All staff, volunteers, contractors, Board members, or other adults who breach this code of conduct may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with their employment, other agreements, professional codes or terms of engagement with the school.

In instances where a breach is reported to an external authority, such as the Police, DFFH, CCYP or VIT, the matter will be managed in line with the guidelines and requirements of any relevant scheme or where required under the advice of the relevant authority (e.g. in the case of a Police investigation).

Any breach or suspected of this code must be reported to the Principal, Paul van Breugel at paul.vanbreugel@YWhittlesea.org.au.

If you believe the principal has breached the code, this must be reported to the CEO Michele Rowse at michele.rowse@YWhittlesea.org.au.

Where a person feels that the school and / or Y Whittlesea has not dealt with a matter appropriately or has failed to comply with the child safe standards they can raise this concern with the Victorian Qualifications and Registration Authority at [Making a complaint \(vrqa.vic.gov.au\)](http://Making a complaint (vrqa.vic.gov.au)).

9. Criminal consequences for failing to protect / report:

All staff should be aware of their obligations as citizens and professionals in relation to reporting child abuse. Failing to meet these obligations can result in criminal prosecutions. These include:

- **Failure to Protect offence** – where a person who, by nature of their position in an organisation has the power or responsibility to reduce or remove a substantial risk that a relevant child will become the victim of a sexual offence committed by a person of or over the age of 18 years, or knows that there is a substantial risk that the person will commit a sexual offence against a relevant child, negligently fails to remove or reduce that risk.
- **Failure to Disclose offence** – where a person of or over the age of 18 (whether in Victoria or elsewhere) who has information that leads the person to form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria against a child under the age of 16 years by another person of or over the age of 18 years fails to report this to police and does not have a reasonable excuse for doing so.

Further information about these obligations can be found in the YCS Safeguarding Procedure. Staff must refer to this procedure to ensure they comply with all reporting obligations required in their role.

10. Related policies:

- YCS Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- YCS Complaints Policy
- YMCA Teen and Youth Friendly Safeguarding Policy

11. Related procedures and supporting documents:

- YCS Safeguarding Procedure.

12. Legislative and Industry Requirements:

- [Link](#) to Legislative Compliance Register

13. Policy owner:

The Principal (Executive Manager Y Schools) is responsible for keeping this policy current - including making amendments as required, and regular reviews as scheduled.

14. Document Control:

Review of this policy will be undertaken every 2 years, or prior as required by law, in consultation with appropriate Y People.

Policy available on Y-MAC>Communication>Manuals and Files>Policies and Procedures

This document is due for review on 20/12/2025.

Version:	Description of Amendment	Amended by	Approver and date	Release Date
3.0				
2.0				
1.0	Document created	Paul van Breugel	Board 1/12/2023	1/1/2024

