

## 1.10b

### MERCY EDUCATION CODE OF CONDUCT

#### 1.10b PARENTS

#### *PROMOTING RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS IN A MERCY SCHOOL COMMUNITY*



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# Parent Code of Conduct

## *Promoting Respectful Relationships in a Mercy School Community*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Mercy Education Parent Code of Conduct encourages the development of effective and positive relationships within its school communities. It expects that parents and the wider school community will embrace the Mercy values of *Compassion, Justice, Respect, Hospitality, Service* and *Courage*, and respect Mercy traditions and practices.

Mercy Education Limited (Mercy Education) is committed to providing a supportive, culturally safe, and inclusive environment in which it adopts the safety and wellbeing of all individuals as a fundamental responsibility.

Each Mercy Education school applies the Mercy Education Parent Code of Conduct for its school community.

Mercy Education has no tolerance for child abuse.

Mercy Education welcomes and values the active engagement of parents and the wider school community to contribute to, assisting and nurturing all children and students in its care. Mercy Education schools will seek to provide parents and families with opportunities to participate in decisions which affect the safety or wellbeing of their child or student.

### 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of a Parent Code of Conduct is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children, students, parents, employees, Board Directors, Board committees and the wider school community in Mercy Education schools. The Parent Code of Conduct provides guidance on the acceptable, caring, and respectful relationships expected at all times.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this document:

**Child:** A child is a person under the age of 18 years or as defined according to applicable legislation. Enrolled students over the age of 18 years are not included in the definition of a child.

**Clergy:** any cleric, member of religious institute or other persons who are employed or engaged by a Church body, or appointed by a Church body to voluntary positions, in which they work with or are near children or young people or are engaged in other forms of pastoral care or chaplaincy.

NB: Whilst specifically the definition of the word 'clergy' is for ordained persons who are religious leaders serving the needs of their religion and its members, for the purpose of this document, it includes other professed religious personnel providing pastoral care or chaplaincy services.

**Conduct:** the way a parent, carer or member of the wider school community behaves in the school environment or school boarding environment or at a school-sanctioned event, or in communication with other members of the school community.

**Employee:** an individual working in a school environment or school boarding environment who is:

- directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority
- contracted service provider (whether a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary) engaged by the school governing authority to perform child-related work; or
- a minister of religion, a religious leader or an employee or officer of a religious body associated with the school (ref Clergy)

**Parent:** applies to all those in a parenting capacity of a child, student, prospective student, or past student, including carers, guardians, and natural, step, family caregiver, or adoptive parents.

**School boarding environment:** any physical, online, or virtual space made available or authorised by Mercy Education for a child or student boarding at a school boarding premises to use at any time, including:

- a) online or virtual school boarding environments (including email, intranet systems, software applications, collaboration tools, and online services);
- b) other locations provided by the provider of school boarding services or through a third-party provider for a child or student to use including, but not limited to, locations used for:
  - (i) camps
  - (ii) approved homestay accommodation
  - (iii) delivery of education and training such as registered training organisations, TAFEs, non-school senior secondary providers, or another school; or
  - (iv) sporting events, excursions, competitions, or other events

**School environment:** any of the following physical, online, or virtual places, used during or outside school hours:

- a) A campus of the school
- b) Online or virtual school environments made available or authorised by the school governing authority for use by a child or student (including email, intranet systems, software applications, collaboration tools, and online services); and
- c) Other locations provided by the school or through a third-party provider for a child or student to use including, but not limited to, locations used for:
  - (i) camps
  - (ii) approved homestay accommodation
  - (iii) delivery of education and training such as registered training organisations, TAFEs, non-school senior secondary providers, or another school; or
  - (iv) sporting events, excursions, competitions, or other events.

**Student** means a person who is enrolled at or attends the school or a student at the school boarding premises

#### 4. STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR

The Mercy Education Parent Code of Conduct is based on the concept of respectful relationships and established community acceptable behaviours.

The Principal is expected to ensure that parents understand their obligation to observe and support the Mercy Education Parent Code of Conduct.

Support the Mission and Reputation of Mercy Education

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

Parents are expected to actively contribute to a school culture that respects the dignity of all its members and affirms the gospel values of love, care for others, compassion, and justice.

Parents should respect the moral values and teachings of the Catholic Church and the aims, philosophy, and ethos of the Mercy school. Parents should act as role models, showing integrity and always conducting themselves in a manner that will not discredit their school or Mercy Education.

Parents should work in partnership with their school to promote the holistic development of their child or student and promptly address any conflict or concerns that may arise.

Parents should report to the school principal (or delegate) any inappropriate conduct or conduct which might be considered a breach of the Mercy Education Parent Code of Conduct, or common law.

Parents should respect the privacy and confidentiality of personal and sensitive information and disclose such information only to authorised persons.

Parents should strive for open, positive, and honest communications with the school and its community.

Parents must be aware of and acknowledge the ethical issues and legal implications that may be associated with the use of social media as a communication platform.

Parents should provide a suitable workspace for their child or student in the home environment including appropriate surroundings for school videoconferencing requirements as necessary

Parents should not participate or conduct conversations in virtual classrooms, even if present to supervise.

## **4.2 Acceptable behaviours**

The following guidelines provide examples of customary expectations for parents; however, the list should not be viewed as exhaustive.

### **4.2.1 Communication**

All parents are responsible for supporting the safety of all members of the school community by:

- communicating with school employees and Mercy Education National Office employees in a way that is courteous and respectful
- using polite and non-abusive language in written and verbal communication
- providing encouraging and constructive feedback as appropriate
- responding to emails and telephone calls in a timely manner. Responses are not expected to be instantaneous or outside normal working hours, unless of an urgent nature. The school will endeavour to respond to parent emails within two business days during term
- using all means of communication responsibly so that literature is not associated with the school or Mercy Education in any way, without the express permission of the Principal
- ensuring written and verbal communication does not bring the school's name, image and/or reputation into disrepute. The use of social media should not bring the school's name, image and/or reputation into disrepute and any association with the school or Mercy Education must have written permission from the Principal prior to publication
- respecting the privacy and sensitivity of digital information including images of children or students, by refraining from posting or sharing when in school uniform, or without the express consent of the respective parent(s)
- refraining from making contact via social media with children or students other than their own child or student
- refraining from participating or conducting conversations when lessons are being conducted online and accessed by their child (children) or student(s) off-site in real time
- reading the school newsletter and other school communication in a timely manner

### **4.2.2 Relationships**

All parents are responsible for supporting the safety of all members of the school community by:

- encouraging their child or student to strive for their personal best
- celebrating individual and school achievements
- engaging in school activities and encouraging their child or student to involve themselves in all aspects of school life
- demonstrating parents and employees working in partnership for the benefit of the child or student
- modelling resilience and healthy problem-solving
- listening to their child or student but recognising that a different 'reality' may exist elsewhere

- supervising the behaviour of children or students in their company that are not enrolled at the school
- refraining from discussions regarding any grievance(s) with the school, or from public criticism of school activities, in front of their children or student(s)
- immediately referring any matters or concerns related to student behaviour to the school
- refraining from actions and behaviour that may constitute harassment or discrimination, especially in an online environment
- Seek permission from other parents before approaching or interacting with other children or students to avoid questions of impropriety

#### **4.2.3 School Policies and Procedures**

All parents are responsible for supporting the safety of all members of the school community by:

- supporting the school's policies and acknowledging that the Principal is responsible for implementation
- complying with all relevant policies and procedures published on the school website and / or parent portal and available upon request
- supporting participation by their child or student in co-curricular activities and school events
- attending parent information sessions and scheduled interviews
- supporting consistent and punctual attendance and promptly reporting a child or student absence, late arrival, or early departure to the school
- contributing to a culture of privacy and confidentiality
- immediately reporting any concerns related to the safety of children or students using established school reporting procedures

#### **4.2.4 Conflict Management**

All parents are responsible for supporting the safety of all members of the school community by:

- seeking assistance by teaching staff, if necessary, to resolve conflict peacefully and co-operatively
- working with the school to deal with areas of concern
- accepting a school decision or outcome and complying with any directions
- speaking with school employees if there is difficulty in fulfilling any directions
- acting in accordance with the principles of the school's complaints and grievance process

## **5. CODE RELATIONSHIPS**

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

- Relevant State or Federal legislation

The Mercy Education Parent Code of Conduct should be read as superior to:

- any diocesan Church or Catholic Education policy
- any local school policy, guidelines, procedures, or practice
- other guidance

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

## **6. NON-COMPLIANCE WITH THE MERCY EDUCATION PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT**

All parents are required to comply with the Mercy Education Parent Code of Conduct. Each Mercy school has a responsibility for the safety of its children, students, employees, Board Directors, Board committees and other community members from behaviour which is, or may be, physically or emotionally harmful, or may bring the school or members of the school community into disrepute. Mercy Education has a legal obligation to provide a safe workplace for Board Directors, Board Committee members, employees, volunteers, parents, visitors, and contractors.

Any person, who holds a belief in good faith, that the Mercy Education Parent Code of Conduct has been breached, may raise the matter with the Principal of the school in the first instance. The Principal (or delegate) may seek to resolve the situation with a discussion but has the option to undertake mediation or commence legal action.

Where a parent's behaviour is deemed by the Principal as being likely to cause ongoing harm, distress or danger to an employee or others, through non-compliance with the Mercy Education Parent Code of Conduct, the school may enact a range of consequences depending on the nature and extent of the breach.

These consequences may include, but are not limited to:

- Imposing a temporary or permanent ban on the parent entering the school premises
- Suspending or terminating a child's or student's enrolment at the school
- Contacting the police
- Responding in a way that the school considers necessary and appropriate in the circumstances

Parents have access to the Mercy Education Complaints Management Policy, available at <https://www.mercy.edu.au/resources/policies>



## 7. RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND RESOURCES

Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd (ACSL)

- <https://www.acsltd.org.au/>

Catholic Education Commission Victoria (CECV)

- [CECV Anti-Bullying Guide for Principals and Leaders 2019](#)
- [CECV Social Media Policy Template 2014](#)
- [CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety](#)

Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd (CESL)

- [Child Safe Policies and Templates June 2022 \(https://www.ceosand.catholic.edu.au/about-us/policies\)](https://www.ceosand.catholic.edu.au/about-us/policies)

Catholic Education South Australia (CESA)

- <https://www.cesa.catholic.edu.au/our-schools/safe-environments-for-all>

Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA)

- <https://childsafe.cewa.edu.au/>

Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Ltd (DOBCEL)

- [DOBCEL-Child-Safe-Governance-Policy-Procedures-2021](#)
- [DOBCEL-Child-Safe-Risk-Management](#)
- [DOBCEL-Child-Safe-School-Policy](#)

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS)

- [Child Protection – Reporting Obligations \(https://www.macs.vic.edu.au/About-Us/Policies.aspx\)](https://www.macs.vic.edu.au/About-Us/Policies.aspx)

Mercy Education Limited (MEL)

- *1.06 Policy Complaints Management*
- *1.10 Policy Codes of Conduct*
- *1.10a Code of Conduct for Employees and Volunteers*
- *6.09 Policy Child Safety*

Legislation

- *Model Work, Health, and Safety Laws (as applicable to states)*
- *Ministerial Order 1359 (Vic) Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises*
- *Criminal Law legislation (as applicable to states)*

### Review History

Version	Date Released	Next Review	Author	Approved
1.0	October 2019	August 2021	MEL Executive	MEL Board
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