



Chairo
Christian School

Child Safety

Last Revision: 14 December 2017



Our Statement of Commitment

Acknowledging our responsibility to God, we commit ourselves to protecting the safety of those children entrusted to our care as students. We believe that by role modelling our core values of **Christ-like character, Biblical foundation, Partnership, Relationship, Achievement, Uniqueness and Stewardship**, we will create and maintain an environment where the safety of children is a high priority.

We are always reminded by the teaching of Jesus, as recorded in Matthew 18, where He makes clear the value of children to Him, and the seriousness of causing them to stumble. As His followers, we seek to take this teaching seriously.

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?'

He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: 'I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.'

'And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.'

Matthew 18:1–6 NIV84

At Chairo, we have developed a Strategy and Action Plan and a Child Safety Code of Conduct that provide all members of our school community with clear guidance in relation to how we aim to fulfil our responsibilities to keep children safe. Our Strategy and Action Plan is built around the following pillars:

- **Culture**
- **Inclusion**
- **Expectations**
- **Human Resources Practice**
- **Reporting**
- **Risk Management**
- **Empowerment**

Our Values

CHRIST-LIKE CHARACTER

We are being transformed daily through God's word and Spirit, as both individuals and as a community.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

We maintain an uncompromising biblical foundation in all that we think, do and say.

PARTNERSHIP

We partner with parents as they seek to fulfil their God-given responsibility for the nurture and education of their children.

RELATIONSHIP

We grow relationships that express the love and rule of Christ.

ACHIEVEMENT

We provide an educational environment in which students and staff members are nurtured toward reaching their potential through and for Christ.

UNIQUENESS

We celebrate and respond to the uniqueness of each individual as an image-bearer of God.

STEWARDSHIP

We steward wisely all that God has given us for the cause of Christian education.



Strategy and Action Plan

CULTURE

We have a Christ-centred culture where students are loved and cared for, and where they feel safe. Staff members and parents partner with each other to nurture and encourage students to achieve to their God-given potential.

- Staff members and parents partner with each other to nurture and encourage students to achieve to their God-given potential.
- Leaders understand and are held accountable for their child safety responsibilities.
- Staff members are trained to ensure that child safety is 'front of mind' at all times.
- We regularly talk about child safety in our leadership meetings with a view to eliminating or reducing risks to the safety of students.

INCLUSION

Our differences are valued.

- Awareness programs are undertaken by staff members and students.
- We regularly talk positively and encouragingly about our differences.
- The cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students are considered by teachers in their delivery methods.
- Teachers are trained to be equipped to cater for students with varied background needs.
- Learning support is provided to students in order to cater for individual differences.



EXPECTATIONS

Clear expectations exist that staff members and all others engaged in child-connected work will conduct themselves in ways that promote and uphold the safety of our students.

- Workers within the school are trained in the expectations outlined by the Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- The Child Safety Code of Conduct is made available to all members of the school community, as well as to the wider public.
- Compliance with the Child Safety Code of Conduct is monitored regularly.
- The Child Safety Code of Conduct is reviewed regularly to ensure its effectiveness.

HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICE

Our HR practices (including recruitment, induction, training, supervision and management) are designed to promote child safety and reduce the risk of child abuse.

- Job applicants are given our Child Safety Code of Conduct when applying for employment.
- Job applicants are screened and commit to complying with the Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- Staff members are required to maintain wwcc and Police checks.
- Job applicants are reminded in interviews about our Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- Staff members are trained with regard to their obligations as part of their induction.
- Teaching staff must participate in training initiatives that are designed to enhance child safety.



REPORTING

Clear processes exist for reporting and responding to suspected child abuse.

- We have a clear procedure to report suspected child abuse.
- Campus Child Protection Officers are appointed.
- Reported incidents of suspected child abuse are appropriately managed.
- Where appropriate, matters are reported to authorities without hesitation.
- The Executive Leadership Team monitors compliance with child safety procedures.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Processes exist to identify, and remove or reduce, risks of child abuse.

- Risk assessments are regularly conducted to continually identify and eliminate or reduce risks of child abuse.
- Processes exist to minimise virtual and online abuse.
- The Executive Leadership Team monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the implementation of risk controls.

EMPOWERMENT

Students are educated in standards of behaviour, healthy and respectful relationships, resilience and child abuse.

- Age appropriate educational sessions are presented on the topic of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours and self-protection strategies.
- Age appropriate educational sessions are delivered regarding Chairo's child safety program as preventative behaviours and how they are able to register any concerns.



Child Safety Code of Conduct

This Child Safety Code of Conduct outlines appropriate standards of behaviour for all adults towards students. The Code serves to protect students, reduce opportunities for abuse or harm to occur, and promote child safety in the school environment. It provides guidance regarding how to best support students and how to avoid or better manage difficult situations. Where a staff member breaches the Code, Chairo may take disciplinary action, including summary dismissal in the case of serious breaches. The Code is revised annually.

Chairo has the following expectations in relation to behaviours and boundaries for all adults interacting with students within our school community.

DO:

- Behave as a positive role model to students, in a manner consistent with Chairo's ethos, particularly as outlined in the Code of Respect.
- Promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of students.
- Be vigilant and proactive with regard to student safety and child protection issues.
- Provide age-appropriate supervision for students.
- Comply with guidelines published by the school with regard to child protection.
- Treat all students with respect.
- Promote the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability.
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of linguistically and culturally diverse students.
- Use positive and affirming language towards students.
- Encourage students to 'have a say' and then listen to them with respect.



- Listen and respond to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling you that they or another student have been abused or that they are worried about their safety or the safety of another student.
- Value all people as created in God's image and as the objects of His saving grace.
- Help provide an open, safe and supportive environment for all students to interact and socialise.
- Intervene when students are engaging in inappropriate bullying behaviour towards others or acting in a humiliating or vilifying way.
- Report concerns about child safety to one of our nominated Child Protection Officers and ensure that your legal obligations to report allegations externally are met.
- Ensure as quickly as possible, where an allegation of child abuse is made, that the student involved is safe.
- Call the Police on 000 if you have immediate concerns for a student's safety.
- Respect the privacy of students and their families, and only disclose information to people who have an identifiable 'need to know'.
- Take an active interest and respond to any scenario where a student might be unsafe. This is everyone's responsibility.
- Report any breaches of this Child Safety Code of Conduct.

DO NOT:

- Do not engage in any form of inappropriate behaviour towards students or expose students to such behaviour.
- Do not use prejudice, oppressive behaviour or inappropriate language with students.
- Do not unlawfully discriminate against any student.
- Do not engage in open discussions of an adult nature in the presence of students.



- Do not engage in any form of sexual conduct with a student, including making sexually suggestive comments and sharing sexually suggestive material.
- Do not engage in inappropriate or unnecessary physical conduct or behaviours, including doing things of a personal nature that a student can do for themselves (e.g. toileting, changing clothes).
- Do not engage in any form of physical violence towards a student, including inappropriately rough physical play.
- Do not use physical means or corporal punishment to discipline a student.
- Do not engage in any form of behaviour that has the potential to cause serious emotional or psychological harm to a student.
- Do not develop 'special' relationships with students that could be seen as favouritism (e.g. offering gifts or special treatment to specific students), or could amount to grooming behaviour.
- Do not engage in undisclosed private meetings with a student that is not your own child.
- Do not engage in inappropriate personal communications with a student through any medium, including online contact or interactions (see part 7 of the Staff & Students Professional Boundaries Policy).
- Do not take or publish (including online) any photos, movies or recordings of a student unless in accordance with Chairo's Student Images Policy.
- Do not publish any information about a student that may identify them, unless in accordance with Chairo's Privacy Policy.
- Do not ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosure of child abuse.
- In the school environment or at other school events where students are present, do not consume alcohol contrary to school policy or take illicit drugs under any circumstance.



REPORTING CONCERNS

The Program also includes information for Board members, staff members and direct contact volunteers regarding how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and how to report child abuse concerns to one of our nominated Child Protection Officers.

It also contains detailed procedures in relation to reporting child abuse incidents to relevant authorities.

Third party contractors, external education providers, indirect contact volunteers, students, parents or other community members who have any concerns that a child may be subject to abuse are asked to contact a Child Protection Officer whose responsibility it is to ensure that appropriate action is taken.

CHILD PROTECTION OFFICERS

Drouin	Judy Linossier	0407 958 062
	Mandy Smith	0427 003 345
Drouin East	Judy Linossier	0407 958 062
	Di McAllister	0407 287 643
	Mandy Smith	0427 003 345
Leongatha	Anthony Collier	0412 490 724
	Shelley Hermens	0402 114 616
Pakenham	Peter Wells	0484 081 805
	Di McAllister	0407 287 643
	Peter Stebbins	5942 5632 ext 367
Traralgon	Keryn de Bruyn	0408 527 027
	Shelley Hermens	0402 114 616
Whole School	Michelle Sharp	0472 845 156

Communications will be treated confidentially on a 'need to know' basis.

Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger, the Police should be called immediately on 000.



Child Protection and Safety Policy

Policy Number: CHI-003.L2.03

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Adopted: 17 June 2016

Last Amended: December 2017

Next Review: June 2020

1. **Preamble**

- 1.1. All children are precious in the sight of God. The Bible indicates that the nurture of children is a high priority in the community with specific responsibility being given to parents (Ephesians 6:4; Deuteronomy 4:9). It is the responsibility of all members of the Chairo school community to love, and therefore protect, the students in their care. This love, as described in 1 Corinthians 13, must guide the words and actions of staff members as they stand in the place of parents.
- 1.2. This policy is a companion to other Chairo documents and should be read in conjunction with them, including:
 - *Child Safety Statement of Commitment;*
 - *Child Safety Strategy and Action Plan;* and
 - *Child Safety Code of Conduct*
- 1.3. Chairo is committed to the protection of all children from all forms of child abuse and demonstrates this commitment through the implementation of a comprehensive *Child Protection Program* designed to keep children safe. Child abuse includes sexual offences, grooming, physical violence, serious emotional or psychological harm, serious neglect and a child's exposure to family violence.
- 1.4. Chairo has a zero tolerance for child abuse and is committed to acting in the best interests of children and to keeping them safe from harm. The school regards its child protection responsibilities to be of the utmost importance and, as such, is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations, and to maintaining a child safe culture.
- 1.5. Upon enrolment, the school enters into an agreement with parents/guardians to assist them in their God-given responsibility for the nurture of their children. The school strives to fulfill their contract to support parents but not to the detriment of the welfare of the student. It is part of the school's duty of care to ensure that students receive the protection that is due to them.
- 1.6. Students cannot be expected to know their rights nor to assert them if they became subject to abusive behaviours from another person. Therefore, in every action taken in response to a case of suspected child abuse, assault and/or neglect, the best interest of the student is of paramount consideration.
- 1.7. Other policies and procedures that relate directly to the health, safety, protection and welfare of students include the *Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Policy*, *Student Discipline & Behaviour Policy*, *Bullying (Students) Policy*, *Welfare Services Policy*, *Health and Wellbeing (Students) Policy*, *Christian Foundations Policy*, *Volunteers Policy*, *Visitors Policy*, *Staff Conduct & Professional Practice Policy*, *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*, and *Recruitment and Selection Procedures*.

2. **Child Safe Values & Principles**

- 2.1. Chairo's commitment to child safety is based on the following overarching values and principles that guide the development and regular review of our work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse:
 - All children have the right to be safe.
 - The welfare and best interests of the child are paramount.
 - The views of the child and a child's privacy must be respected.
 - Clear expectations for appropriate behavior with children are established in our *Child Safety Code of Conduct* and *Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Policy*.



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- The safety of children is dependent upon the existence of a child safe culture.
- Child safety awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our school community.
- Procedures are in place to screen all staff members and volunteers, including third party contractors and external education providers who have direct contact with children.
- Child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.
- Child protection training is mandatory for all Board members, staff members and volunteers.
- Procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the school community.
- Children from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds have the right to special care and support, including those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
- Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support.

3. Objectives

3.1. This policy provides the framework for:

- development of work systems, practices, policies and procedures to promote child protection within the school;
- creation of a positive and robust child protection culture;
- promotion and open discussion of child protection issues within the school; and
- compliance with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child protection in Victoria.

4. Child Protection Program

- 4.1. Chairo is committed to the effective implementation of the school's *Child Protection Program* and to ensuring that it is appropriately reviewed and updated. The school adopts a risk management approach by identifying key risk indicators and assessing child safety risks based on a range of factors, including the nature of our school's activities, physical and online environments, and the characteristics of the student body.
- 4.2. Chairo's *Child Protection Program* relates to all aspects of protecting children from abuse and establishes work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse. It includes:
- clear information as to what constitutes child abuse and associated key risk indicators;
 - clear procedures for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse;
 - strategies to support, encourage and enable staff members, volunteers, parents and students to understand, identify, discuss and report child protection matters;
 - procedures for recruiting and screening Board members, staff members and volunteers;
 - pastoral care strategies designed to empower students and keep them safe;
 - policies with respect to cultural diversity and students with disabilities;
 - a child protection training program;
 - information regarding steps to take after disclosure of abuse to protect, support and assist children;
 - guidelines with respect to record keeping and confidentiality;
 - policies to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and standards (including the *Victorian Child Safe Standards*); and
 - a system for continuous review and improvement.
- 4.3. As a part of Chairo's induction process, all staff members and volunteers are required to complete training relating to the content of our *Child Protection Program*. All staff members and all volunteers (including Board members) are also provided with additional, ongoing child protection training.
- 4.4. Staff members and volunteers, third-party contractors and external education providers are supported by Chairo's nominated Child Protection Officers to ensure that they are compliant with the school's approach to child protection.



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4.5. Mandatory Reporting

All mandatory reporters must make a report to Victoria Police and/or DHHS Child Protection as soon as practicable if, during the course of carrying out their professional roles and responsibilities, they form a belief on reasonable grounds that:

- a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical abuse and/or sexual abuse; and
- the child's parents have not protected, or are unlikely to protect, the child from harm of that type.

Refer: Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools, esp. page 7

4.6. Failure to Disclose

The offense of failure to disclose applies to all adults (not just professionals who work with children) who form a reasonable belief that another adult may have committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 years of age and fail to report this information to the Victoria Police.

Refer: Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools, esp. page 7

Refer: Failure to Disclose Fact Sheet

4.7. Failure to Protect

The offense of failure to protect applies to a person in a position of authority within an organisation who:

- knows of a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16, under the care, supervision or authority of the organisation, will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with the organisation (e.g. employee, contractors, volunteer, visitor); and
- negligently fails to remove or reduce the risk of harm.

Refer: Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools, esp. page 7

Refer: Failure to Protect Fact Sheet

4.8. Grooming

Grooming is when a person engages in predatory conduct to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time. It can include communicating and/or attempting to befriend or establish a relationship or other emotional connection with the child or their parent/carer.

Refer: Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools, esp page 15,16

Refer: Grooming Fact Sheet

4.9. Duty of Care to Prevent Child Abuse

The school owes a duty to take care that, in all the circumstances of the case, is reasonable to prevent the abuse of a child by an individual associated with the school while the child is under the care, supervision or authority of the school. Abuse includes sexual and physical abuse.

Refer: [The New Organizational Duty of Care to Prevent Child Abuse Fact Sheet](#)

4.10. Reportable Conduct Scheme

The school is required to notify the Commission for Children and Young People of any allegation of reportable conduct made against a worker or volunteer.

There are five types of reportable conduct:

- Sexual offences committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- Sexual misconduct committed against, with or in the presence of a child
- Physical violence against, with or in the presence of a child
- Any behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child
- Significant neglect of a child

Any staff member, volunteer or contractor who needs clarification as to whether they have a 'reasonable belief' to report or not should speak with a Child Protection Officer.



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Refer: [About the Reportable Conduct Scheme](#)

Refer: [Definitions of Reportable Conduct and Reasonable Belief](#)

4.11. Historical Sexual Abuse Reports

If a former student is now an adult and makes a claim of historic abuse within the school context, the school must notify the Police. If the former student is still a child, a mandatory report to the Department of Health and Human Services and a reportable conduct allegation to the Commission for Children and Young People must be made. Reporting requirement under the Crimes Act may also apply.

4.12. Student Sexual Offending

Student sexual offending refers to sexual behaviour that is led by a student aged 10 years and over that may amount to a sexual offence. A sexual offence includes rape, sexual assault, indecent acts and other unwanted sexualised touching, all of which are offences under the Crimes Act 1958.

Refer: Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending (the whole document is relevant but pages 5-7 are a good introduction and important definitions)

4.13. Students Under 10

If a staff member is unsure of any form of sexualised behaviour or has protective concerns for a child under the age of 10, they will speak with a Child Protection Officer.

Refer: Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending (Appendix 1, pages 40-42)

5. **Responsibilities**

5.1. Child protection is everyone's responsibility. At Chairo, all Board members and staff members, as well as volunteers, have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children. Specific responsibilities include:

- **Board members.** Each member of the Board is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to allow the school's *Child Protection and Safety Policy* and *Child Protection Program* to be effectively implemented within the school and are responsible for holding the Executive Principal and the executive leadership team accountable for effective implementation.
- **Executive Principal.** The Executive Principal is responsible and accountable for taking all practical measures to ensure that our *Child Protection and Safety Policy* and our *Child Protection Program* are implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child protection culture is maintained within the school.
- **Child Protection Officers.** A number of senior staff members are nominated as Child Protection Officers and receive additional specialised training with respect to child protection issues. They are the first point of contact for raising child protection concerns within the school. They are also responsible for championing child protection within the school and assisting in coordinating responses to child protection incidents.
- **Staff members.** All staff members are required to be familiar with the contents of our *Child Protection and Safety Policy* and our *Child Protection Program*, and with their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the school's Child Protection Officers.
- **Volunteers.** All volunteers are required to be familiar with the contents of the school's *Child Protection and Safety Policy* and *Child Safety Code of Conduct*, and with their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the school's Child Protection Officers.
- **Service providers.** All third party contractors (service providers) engaged by the school are responsible for contributing to the safety and protection of children in the school environment. All



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service providers engaged by the school are required to be familiar with our *Child Protection and Safety Policy* and our *Child Protection Program*. The school may include this requirement in the written agreement between the school and the service provider.

6. Reporting Child Protection Concerns

6.1. Depending on the type of conduct that occurs, the following authorities must be notified:

- Victoria Police under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) (Crimes Act) if the conduct amounts to a sexual offence or abuse (failure to disclose offence)
- The DHHS under the CYFA if the conduct meets the mandatory reporting criteria
- The VIT under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic) (ETR Act) if the conduct involves a registered teacher (if the teacher misconduct involves a sexual offence, the VIT must be notified immediately)
- The Commission for Children and Young People (the Commission) under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) (the CWS Act) if the allegation is against an employee, volunteer, contractor, office holder, minister of religion or officer of a religious body (an initial report is to be made within three days and a further report within 30 days)

Note: The online reporting procedure is outlined at this website:

<https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/reportable-conduct-scheme/reporting-and-investigating-allegations/>

The Commission has the power to share information it obtains under the Reportable Conduct Scheme to other organisations, including the Working with Children Check Unit and the Victoria Institute of Teaching.

- 6.2. In all circumstances, allegations of criminal conduct by a worker or volunteer must be reported to the Police as a first priority. Once the Police have been notified and a child is not at risk of harm, the school should then consider its reporting obligations under other legislation.
- 6.3. The school's *Child Protection Program* provides detailed guidance for Board members, staff members and volunteers regarding how to identify key risk indicators of child abuse and how to report child abuse concerns to one of the nominated Child Protection Officers. It also contains detailed procedures with respect to the reporting of child abuse incidents to relevant authorities.
- 6.4. Third party contractors (service providers), external education providers, volunteers, students, parents/carers or other community members who have concerns that a child may be subject to abuse are asked to contact one of the school's Child Protection Officers, whose responsibility it is to ensure that appropriate action is taken. Communications will be treated confidentially on a need-to-know basis. Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger, the police should be called on 000.

7. Policy & Program Review

- 7.1. Chairo is committed to the continuous improvement of our *Child Protection Program*, which is regularly reviewed for overall effectiveness and to ensure compliance with all child protection related laws, regulations and standards.



Staff and Students Professional Boundaries Policy

Policy Number: STA-006.01

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Adopted: 30 July 2016

Last Amended: N/A

Next Review: July 2018

1. Preamble

- 1.1. This policy applies to all teaching staff, non-teaching staff, Board directors, volunteers (direct and indirect), third party contractors and external education providers (together known as 'staff' for the purposes of this policy).
- 1.2. Chairo staff members hold a unique position of influence, authority, trust and power in relation to students at the school. As such, it is their duty, at all times, to maintain professional boundaries with students.
- 1.3. This policy and guidelines are designed to raise awareness of situations where professional boundary violations may occur and some strategies to minimise the risk of boundary violations.
- 1.4. The practicing of protective behaviours at all times will also reduce the possibility of vexatious claims being brought against staff members.
- 1.5. There is a wide network of family relationships, close friendships and commitments to local churches, cultural and sporting groups within the Chairo school community. All of these have potential for conflicts of interest to develop or for personal friendships to become closer than is wise.
- 1.6. If any staff member becomes concerned that such a relationship could cause a conflict of interest, they are to speak with one of the school's Child Protection Officers.

2. Policy Summary

- 2.1. Chairo is committed to providing a safe physical and emotional environment where all of our students are respected and treated with dignity in an appropriate professional and caring manner where the risk of child abuse is minimised and a safe and supportive child safe environment is maintained.
- 2.2. It is our policy that:
 - staff members exercise their responsibilities in a way that recognises professional boundaries with regard to their relationships with students at all times;
 - staff members identify, discourage and reject any advances of a sexual nature initiated by a student;
 - the interaction of staff members with students is professional at all times, including inside and outside of school hours;
 - conflict of interest issues must be reported to a Child Protection Officer as soon as practicable;
 - equal learning opportunities are given to each student without discrimination; and
 - appropriate consequences will be applied to staff members who breach professional boundaries.

3. Professional Boundaries

- 3.1. Professional boundaries are parameters that describe the limits of a relationship in circumstances where one person (a student) entrusts their welfare and safety to another person (a staff member), in circumstances where a power imbalance exists.
- 3.2. The fact that school staff members are in a unique position of trust, care, authority and influence with students means that there is always an inherent power imbalance that exists between them. It also means that professional boundaries must be established, maintained and respected at all times.
- 3.3. In most cases this power imbalance is clear. However, sometimes it may be more difficult to recognise, especially for younger staff members who may only be a few years older than their students.
- 3.4. The following guidelines are not exhaustive, and given that sometimes 'grey areas' may occur, it is expected that all staff members (no matter their age or experience) use their own good judgment, think



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very carefully of the implications and potential consequences of engaging in certain behaviours with students, and always err on the side of caution.

3.5. When unsure about whether professional boundaries are being, or have been, breached, ask yourself:

- Would I modify my behaviour if a colleague was present?
- How would I feel about explaining my actions at a staff meeting?
- Am I sharing information for the student's benefit, or for my benefit?
- Am I dealing with this student differently from others in similar circumstances?
- Is my language or demeanor different from normal when dealing with this particular student?

4. Intimate Relationships

4.1. Staff members must not initiate or develop a relationship with any student that is or can be misinterpreted as having a romantic or sexual, rather than professional basis. This is regardless of whether the relationship is consensual, non-consensual or condoned by parents/carers.

4.2. Such relationships have a negative impact on the teaching and learning of students and colleagues, and may carry a serious reputational risk for the staff member and, in turn, the school.

4.3. The professional relationship of staff members and students may be breached by:

- flirtatious behaviour or dating;
- development of an intimate personal relationship;
- sexual relations;
- the use of sexual innuendo, inappropriate language and/or material with students;
- unwarranted and inappropriate touching;
- unwarranted and inappropriate filming or photography;
- deliberate exposure to sexual behaviour of others (e.g. pornography);
- having intimate contact without a valid context via written or electronic means (e.g. email, letters, telephone, text messages, social media sites or chat rooms);
- going out, whether alone or in company, to social events such as the movies or dinner; and
- exchanging gifts of a personal nature that encourages the formation of an intimate relationship.

4.4. Staff members should also be aware that developing or encouraging romantic or sexual relationships with recent former students (over 18 years of age) may violate professional boundaries and are strongly discouraged from doing so.

4.5. The imbalance of power and authority that exists in the staff/student relationship does not suddenly disappear after the student finishes their schooling. Staff members should not assume that they will be protected from disciplinary action by claiming that a relationship began only after the student left the school as there may be a reasonable belief that the emotional intimacy of the relationship developed while the staff/student relationship existed.

5. Personal Relationships

5.1. Staff members must not initiate or develop a relationship with any student that is or can be perceived or misinterpreted as having a personal rather than professional element which might compromise the teacher student relationship. This is regardless of whether the relationship is consensual, non-consensual or condoned by parents or carers.

5.2. It is the student's perception of staff behaviour and not the intention of the staff member that is important.

5.3. An established and expected professional relationship between staff members and students may be compromised by staff members doing any of the following unless within an appropriate context (such as church, family, sporting or cultural activity) where there are appropriate safeguards and accountability:

- attending parties or socialising with students outside of organised school events (without parental/carer permission);
- sharing personal details about their private lives with students; or
- meeting with students outside of school hours without permission from the school.



5.4. Staff members must recognise at all times that their role is not to be a 'friend' or 'parent' to a student.

6. Fair Learning Opportunities

6.1. The main focus of teaching is effective student learning and as such, teachers are expected to support their students with their professional expertise so as to offer them the best education in their individual circumstances. The quality of teaching and learning between teachers and students characterises their relationship.

6.2. Teachers should demonstrate their commitment to student learning by:

- maintaining a safe and challenging learning environment that promotes mutual respect;
- recognising and developing each student's abilities, skills and talents by catering to their individual abilities and respecting their individual differences;
- encouraging students to develop and reflect on their own values;
- interacting with students without bias;
- not engaging in preferential treatment;
- not discriminating against any student on the basis of race, sex, sexuality, disability or religious or political conviction; and
- always making decisions in the best interests of students.

7. Electronic Communications Between Staff & Students

7.1. This topic is covered within Chairo's *Electronic Communication & Information Technology Policy* (sections 3.3.11, 3.3.12) and *Social Media Policy* (3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.2.6 – 3.2.10).

7.2. It is expected that the following guidelines will be adhered to:

- all use of technology by staff members should be for educational purposes or for the organisation of co-curricular activities;
- all email communication between staff members and students should be via the school email system and reflect a professional staff/student relationship;
- staff members should not communicate with students via text message where it is not in a professional context;
- staff members should not give out their personal social media contact details;
- staff members should only provide their personal telephone numbers to students if required in the course of carrying out their professional duties;
- staff members should not exchange personal pictures with a student and;
- any student personal contact numbers or other personal contact details made available to the school should only be used for school communications.

8. Physical Contact with Students

8.1. All staff members should be aware that situations may arise that can be perceived in a manner that was not intended. For this reason, all staff members at the school should adhere to the following guidelines for contact with students both in and outside of school grounds:

8.1.1. Avoid unnecessary physical contact with students.

8.1.2. Minimal, non-lingering, non-gratuitous physical contact in the context of the situation is acceptable (e.g. congratulatory pat on the back or handshake).

8.1.3. Contact for sport, drama and dance instruction is acceptable in a class situation but not in a 1:1 situation. If physical contact is required for specific technical instructions, it must be brief and only with the consent of the student. Note that a student may withdraw consent for this contact either verbally or by gesture, and staff members must remain vigilant whilst engaging in necessary contact situations. Once consent has been withdrawn, no further contact can be or should be made.



9. Off-Campus Excursions and Camps

9.1. During off-campus excursions or camps, the same physical contact guidelines apply, as well as the following:

- 9.1.1. Checking of sleeping arrangements, or supervising of students changing, should be done, where possible, with another staff member present and always in a manner that respects students' privacy and personal space;
- 9.1.2. Always knock and advise of presence prior to entering a bedroom or dormitory; and
- 9.1.3. Ensure that while in a bedroom or dormitory, a strict staff/student relationship is upheld and that inappropriate behaviour is not undertaken.

10. Staff Responsibilities

10.1. All staff members are to:

- follow the guidelines as set out in this policy;
- report any conflicts of interest immediately; and
- remove themselves from decision-making where a conflict has been identified.

10.2. Where a staff member breaches this policy, the school may take disciplinary action including, in the case of serious breaches, summary dismissal.

11. Implementation

11.1. These guidelines are implemented through a combination of:

- staff training and development in professional conduct;
- student and parent/carer education and information;
- effective management of teachers engaging in inappropriate relationships with students;
- effective management of conflicts of interest;
- effective communication and incident notification procedures;
- effective record-keeping procedures; and
- initiation of corrective actions where necessary.