

Mercy Education Parent Code of Conduct

Promoting Respectful Relationships in a Mercy school community



June 2020

Mercy Education Parent Code of Conduct

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Respectful Relationships in a Mercy school

Parent Code of Conduct

1. INTRODUCTION

Mercy Education is committed to providing a supportive and inclusive environment in which it holds the safety and wellbeing of individuals as a central and fundamental responsibility.

Mercy Education has a zero tolerance to child abuse.

Mercy Education Limited (Mercy Education) welcomes and values the active engagement of parents and the wider school community to assist and nurture the care of all children in its care.

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 its traditions and practices.

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

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to provide parents, staff, students and the wider school community with a Parent Code of Conduct in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and employees in Mercy schools.

3. DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this document:

Conduct is the way a parent or carer behaves on the school property, or at a school-sanctioned event, or in communication with other members of the school community off-site.

Parents applies to all those in a parenting capacity of a student, prospective student or past student, including carers, guardians, and natural, step, family care-giver, or adoptive parents.

Employees includes all staff, contractors and volunteers who contribute to the operations of Mercy schools.

Child is a legal minor i.e. a young person enrolled as a student at a Mercy Education school. 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.

4. STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR

The Mercy Education Parent Code of Conduct is based on respectful relationships and 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 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 always and 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 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 reasonably be considered a breach of the Mercy Education Parent Code of Conduct, or of 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 should acknowledge the ethical and legal issues associated with the use of social media as a communication platform.

Parents should provide a suitable workspace for children in the home environment including appropriate surroundings for school videoconferencing requirements as required.

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 general expectations for parents, so the list is not exhaustive.

4.2.1 Communication

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

- communicating with employees in a way that is always courteous and respectful
- using polite and acceptable language in written and verbal communication
- providing encouraging and constructive feedback
- responding to emails and telephone calls in a timely manner. Responses are not expected to be instantaneous or out of normal working hours, unless of an urgent nature. The school endeavours to respond to parent emails within two business days.

- 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 should not bring the school's name, image and/or reputation into disrepute and is particularly relevant to the responsible use of social media, so that social media pages are not associated with the school or Mercy Education in any way, without the express permission of the Principal. The use of social media should not bring the school's name, image and/or reputation into disrepute
- respecting the privacy and sensitivity of digital information including student images, by refraining from posting or sharing them on social media channels when in school uniform, or without express consent of the respective parent(s)
- refraining from making contact via social media with students other than their own child
- refraining from participating or conducting conversations when lessons are conducted online and accessed by their child (children) off-site in real time
- reading the school newsletters and other school communications

4.2.2 Relationships

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

- encouraging their child to strive for their personal best and celebrating individual and school achievements
- engaging in school activities and encouraging their child to involve themselves in all aspects of school life
- demonstrating that both parents and employees work together for the benefit of the child
- modelling resilience and healthy problem-solving
- listening to their child but remembering that a different 'reality' may possibly exist elsewhere
- supervising the behaviour of children in their company that are not enrolled at the school
- refraining from discussions regarding any grievances with the school, or from public criticism of school activities, in front of their children
- referring any matters or concerns related to managing student behaviour to school staff immediately, as student discipline is the responsibility of the school
- refraining from actions and behaviour that constitute harassment or discrimination, especially in an online environment
- approaching or interacting with other children, only with the permission of the other parents
- ensuring that any physical contact with a student is appropriate given the age of, and relationship with the student, such that questions of impropriety do not arise.

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 implementing these policies
- complying with all relevant policies and procedures of the school which are published on the school website and are available upon request
- supporting student participation in co-curricular activities and school events
- attending parent information evenings and student progress interviews

- supporting consistent and punctual attendance and promptly reporting a child's absence or late arrival to school
- contributing to a culture where privacy and confidentiality are assured
- reporting any concerns related to the protection of children 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 teaching staff assistance, if necessary, to resolve conflict peacefully and co-operatively
- working with the school to deal promptly with areas of concern
- accepting school decisions and following any directions
- speaking first with a school staff member if there is a problem complying with any directions
- adhering to the school's complaints and grievances processes

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 Office 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 to protect its students and other community members from behaviour which is, or might be, physically or emotionally harmful, or that may bring the school or members of the school community to disrepute. Mercy Education is also under a legal obligation to provide a safe workplace free from harm, for its employees and for the wider school community.

Any person, who holds a reasonable good faith belief that the Mercy Education Parent Code of Conduct may not have been complied with, may raise this matter with the Principal of the Mercy school in the first instance. Where necessary, the Principal (or delegate) will seek to resolve the situation through discussion but has the option to progress to mediation or legal proceedings.

Following appropriate investigation; however, where a parent's behaviour is deemed by the Principal as being likely to cause ongoing harm, distress or danger to a staff member or others, i.e. non-compliance with the Mercy Education Parent Code of Conduct, the school may exercise its legal right to enable a range of outcomes depending on the nature of the breach.

Following appropriate investigation, these outcomes may include, but are not limited to:

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

Parents have access to the Mercy Education Complaints Management Policy, available at www.mercy.edu.au

7. RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND RESOURCES

Catholic Education Office Ballarat (CEOB)

- <https://ceob.edu.au/publications/child-protection/>

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 Melbourne (CEM)

- <https://www.cem.edu.au/Our-Schools/Child-Safety.aspx>

Catholic Education Sandhurst (CES)

- <https://www.ceosand.catholic.edu.au/child-safety>

Catholic Education South Australia (CESA)

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

Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA)

- *CEWA: https://www.cewa.edu.au/learning-and-wellbeing/wellbeing-and-safety/student-safety/*

Catholic Professional Standards Limited (CPSL)

- *CPSL: https://www.cpsltd.org.au/*

Mercy Education Limited (MEL)

- *MEL Policy: 1.06 Complaints Management*
- *MEL Policy: 6.09 Child Protection*
- *MEL Codes of Conduct Policy 2019*
- *MEL Code of Conduct 2019*

Legislation

- *Model Work, Health and Safety Laws (as applicable to states)*
- *Ministerial Order 870 (VIC) https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/childsafes/Pages/schools.aspx*
- *Criminal Law legislation (as applicable to states)*

Review History

| Version | Date Released | Next Review | Author | Approved |
|---------|---------------|-------------|--------------------------|-----------|
| 1.0 | OCT 2019 | AUG 2021 | MEL Executive | MEL Board |
| 1.1 | June 2020 | AUG 2021 | Head of People & Culture | MEL Board |
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