

**Help for non-English speakers**

If you need help to understand this policy, please contact the school Social Worker on 9097 2000

WESTERN AUTISTIC SCHOOL CONTEXT

Western Autistic school is a government funded school, which offers an early year's program for children with autism spectrum disorder in Prep to Grade 3.

All students enrolled at Western Autistic School have the right to feel safe and be safe. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our priority, and we do not and will not tolerate child abuse. Western Autistic School is committed to providing a safe environment for all children and will take active steps to protect them. We aim to create a child-safe and child-friendly environment where children are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety.

Presently, the criteria for entry into Western Autistic School includes a severe language impairment, therefore all students benefit from individualised support to develop their communication skills. Students who cannot rely solely on speech to communicate are supported to use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems to express themselves, and emphasis is placed on authentic communication with the student. The school strives to navigate challenges around our student's ability to self-advocate via the expression of opinions, preferences, and problems, and to ask for help.

PURPOSE

This Code of Conduct has a specific focus on safeguarding children at Western Autistic School against sexual, physical, psychological, and emotional abuse and neglect. It is intended to compliment other professional and occupational codes.

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets out the expected behaviour of adults with children and young people in our school.

All Western Autistic School staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, school council members and any other adult involved in child-connected work must follow the Child Safety Code of Conduct.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct applies to all physical and online environments used by students. It also applies during or outside of school hours and in other locations provided by the school for student use (for example, a school camp).

Acceptable behaviours

As Western Autistic School, staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of our school community involved in child-connected work, we are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

- always upholding our Western Autistic School commitment to child safety and adhering to our Child Safety Policy
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse

- treating students and families in our school community with respect in our school environment 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 disclose that they or another child or student has been abused or are worried about their safety or the safety of another child or student
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal students, students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, students with a disability, international students, students who are unable to live at home and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTIQ+) students
- 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
- reporting an allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to the Principal or Assistant Principal for Wellbeing
- understanding and complying with all reporting and disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) in line with our child safety responding and reporting policy and procedures and the [PROTECT Four Critical Actions](#).
- if child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm.
- reporting to the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) any charges, committals for trial or convictions in relation to the sexual offence by a registered teacher, or specific allegations or concerns about a registered teacher.

Unacceptable behaviours

As Western Autistic School, staff, volunteers, contractors, and member of our school community involved in child-connected work we must not:

- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse or harm
- develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming' behaviour (for example, by offering gifts)
- exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example, inappropriate sitting on laps)
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves (for example toileting or changing clothes)
- display behaviours or engage with students in ways that are not justified by the educational or professional context
- ignore an adult's overly familiar or inappropriate behaviour towards a student

- discuss intimate topics or use sexualised language, except when needed to deliver the school curriculum or professional guidance
- 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 concern or other urgent matter
- photograph or video a child or student in a school environment except in accordance with the [Photographing, Filming and Recording Students policy](#) or where required for duty of care purposes
- consume alcohol against school policy or take illicit drugs in the school environment or at school events where students are present
- work with children while under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs
- Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal social activities)
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- have contact with any student outside of school hours except when needed to deliver the school curriculum or professional guidance and parental permission has been sought.
- have any contact with students or their family through social media channels
- pre-existing social relationships with a student's family should be addressed through the department conflict of interest policy.
- staff communication with families should be through approved school communication modes, including school email address, school phone line, and approved parent communication apps.

TEACHERS:

Teachers are also required to abide by the principles relating to relationships with students as set out in the Victorian Teaching Profession's Code of Conduct published by the VIT. These principles include:

- Knowing their students well, respecting their differences and catering for their individual abilities
- Working to create an environment which promotes mutual respect
- Modelling and engaging in respectful and impartial language
- Protecting students from intimation, embarrassment, humiliation, and harm
- Respecting a student's privacy in sensitive matters

- Interacting with students without displaying bias or preference
- Not violating or compromising the unique position that a teacher holds of influence and trust in their relationships with students

PSYCHOLOGISTS, SCHOOL COUNSELLORS, AND THERAPIST

In their work with students, psychologists and other therapists should also consider their professional obligations as set out in a code of ethics or practice to which they are bound including:

- The Australian Psychological Society
- Speech Pathology Australia
- Occupational Therapy Australia

Breaches to the Child Safety Code of Conduct

All Western Autistic School staff, volunteers, contractors and any other member of the school community involved in child-connected work who breach this Child Safety Code of Conduct may be subject to disciplinary procedures in accordance with their employment agreement or relevant industrial instrument, professional code or terms of engagement.

In instances where a reportable allegation has been made, the matter will be managed in accordance with the Department of Education and Training Reportable Conduct Scheme Policy and may be subject to referral to Victoria Police.

All breaches and suspected breaches of the Western Autistic School Child Safety Code of Conduct must be reported to the principal.

Where the Principal is suspected of breaching this Code of Conduct, the concerned party is advised to contact the Southwest Victoria Region Department of Education on 1300 333 232.

In appropriate cases a breach may be referred to Victoria Police and/ or a regulatory body such as the VIT

I _____ confirm I have been provided a copy of the above Code of Conduct and will abide by it

Signed: _____ Dated: _____

Policy status and review

Assistant Principal Wellbeing is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety Policy at least every two years. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the community.

Approval and Review

Created date	July 2022
Consultation	Presented to school Council on 21 st October 2022
Endorsed by	School Council
Endorsed on	21 st October 2022
Next review date	July 2024