



1. INTRODUCTION

Our MLC community is comprised of students, staff, family members, volunteers, and contractors, working together towards common goals. At MLC, respect, responsibility and compassion are our core values. All relationships should be conducted upholding these values, acting with dignity and courtesy. MLC promotes respectful behaviour at all times in our dealings and relationships within our community. MLC actively encourages reporting of inappropriate behaviour and provides an effective procedure for resolving concerns or complaints in a sensitive, fair, timely and confidential manner.

2. PURPOSE

This policy:

- outlines appropriate standards of behaviour between all members of our community, including between adults and towards students;
- aims to protect students, prevent incidents of abuse or harm occurring and to promote child safety;
- aims to provide a work environment that is safe for all staff;
- provides guidance on how to avoid or better manage challenging situations, and
- is intended to complement child protection legislation, child safe standards, MLC policies and procedures, professional standards, and codes or ethics as applicable.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff working at the College which includes: MLC employees, contractors, agency staff and volunteers, collectively called "College Staff".

This policy applies across all school environments, including all MLC campuses (Kew and the Boarding House, MLC Banksia, and MLC Marshmead), both during and outside of school hours, within and outside the physical school environment (excursions, camps and tours) and the online environment.

4. DUTY OF CARE

At all times, College Staff must hold their duty of care to all students as their first priority. Particular care should be taken to deal with students in a sensitive and supportive manner and to consult with and refer to the appropriate wellbeing staff at MLC. College Staff must seek assistance immediately if at any time they believe their care of students could be compromised.

5. RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

MLC values the relationships between staff and students and acknowledges that the quality of these relationships enhances teaching, learning and wellbeing.



MLC is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Our community recognises the importance of, and a responsibility for, ensuring our school is a safe, supportive and enriching environment, which respects and fosters the self-respect and resilience of students, and enables them to thrive in their learning and development.

There is no neat divide between personal and professional relationships, so College Staff must constantly make judgments that ensure that the relationships enhance students' learning and wellbeing rather than detract from it. We are in a special position of trust and influence and as such, should always act with care, compassion and respect, promoting the wellbeing of students, actively seeking to prevent harm and supporting students who have been harmed.

Relationships should be supportive but not encourage dependence and intimacy; we want to deal with students justly and impartially; we want to build student confidence rather than undermine it; we see the diversity of staff and students as an asset.

Expectations for appropriate behaviour are identified below.

5.1. Acceptable behaviours

All members of the MLC community are responsible for promoting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of students by:

- adhering to MLC's policies relating to child safety at all times
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- treating everyone with respect
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability
- reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to MLC's 'designated contact' as outlined in the MLC Child Protection (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy
- understanding and complying with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) as they relate to protecting children from harm or abuse.
- if child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm
- encouraging students to 'have a say' and participate in all relevant organisational activities where possible, especially on issues that are important to them.



5.2. Unacceptable behaviours

All members of the MLC community must not:

- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions or disclosures of child abuse
- develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming' behaviour (for example, offering gifts)
- exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with students which may be interpreted as abusive and not justified by the educational, therapeutic, or service delivery context
- exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example inappropriate sitting on laps. Sitting on laps could be appropriate sometime, for example whilst reading a storybook to a small child in an open area)
- put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors)
- do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
- ignore behaviours by other adults towards students when they appear to be overly familiar or inappropriate
- discuss content of an intimate nature or use sexual innuendo with students, except where it occurs relevantly in the context of parental guidance, delivering the education curriculum or a therapeutic setting
- treat a child unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity
- use inappropriate language in the presence of students
- 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 school work or extra-curricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter, and in adherence with MLC policies
- photograph or video a child in a school environment except in accordance with MLC policies or where required for duty of care purposes

5.3. Psychological Harm

College Staff must not engage in unreasonable conduct that could cause psychological harm to a child, young person or student.

Examples include: targeted and sustained criticism, belittling or teasing, excessive or unreasonable demands, persistent hostility and severe verbal abuse, rejection and scapegoating, and using inappropriate locations or social isolation as punishment.

5.4. Neglect

College Staff must not neglect students in their care. Neglect occurs when a child or young person is harmed by the failure of a person who has care responsibilities towards a child to provide basic physical and emotional necessities of life, including failure to provide or arrange for the provision of adequate and proper medical attention or lodging for a student.



5.5. Physical contact with students

The nature of the teaching and learning relationship may, on occasion, require physical contact between the student and staff member. Best practice is to ask permission of the student before initiating physical contact in a learning situation.

Sometimes students need physical comfort. Care should be taken that this occurs at times when it is clear that the student cannot be comforted any other way. Ideally it does not occur when staff and student are alone. If physical comfort is given to a student, it is advisable for the staff member to discuss this with his or her relevant manager (CMT Member, Head of School or Head of Department).

College Staff must not assault students. Physical contact which is an inevitable part of everyday life does not amount to assault. For example, there may be occasions where physical contact is made in the process of intervening in order to protect students. Reasonable action, in these circumstances would not be deemed to be assault. College Staff are reminded that physical or corporal punishment is not permitted.

5.6. Sexual Misconduct

Any form of sexual relationship between College Staff and students during or outside school hours is considered sexual misconduct. It is irrelevant whether the relationship is homosexual or heterosexual, consensual or non-consensual or condoned by parents or caregivers. The age of the school student or staff member involved is also irrelevant. This also includes grooming which is predatory conduct undertaken to prepare a child for sexual activity at a later time.

Sexual misconduct is defined as:

Any behaviour that might reasonably be interpreted as being designed or intended to arouse or gratify sexual desires. The following behaviour would constitute either misconduct or sexual misconduct. Unwarranted and inappropriate touching of students, suggestive remarks or action of a sexual nature, sexual exhibitionism, obscene gestures, language, jokes containing sexual references or deliberately exposing students to the sexual behaviour of others in any form, other than in the case of prescribed curriculum material in which sexual themes are contextual, establishing a relationship with a child for the purpose of facilitating a sexual activity at a later time.

6. ELECTRONIC CONTACT WITH STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

Electronic contact with students should always maintain an appropriate professional formality and should enhance the teaching and learning relationship. For example, the timing, language and subject of email contact should be considered thoughtfully.

College Staff should not give private contact details, or personal phone numbers, to students or their families, unless there are exceptional circumstances. In some instances mobile phone numbers may be given when it is specifically relevant to an activity undertaken, for example sport lessons, intensive sport programs or Junior School Music lessons for call or text messaging. All communications must be of a professional nature.



Inappropriate or concerning communication from students or their families should always be reported. (Refer to clause 8.1)

7. RELATIONSHIPS WITH ADULTS IN THE MLC COMMUNITY

We expect all adults in the MLC community (staff:staff and staff:parent) to interact in a professional manner, treating others with respect and courtesy.

8. PROCEDURES

8.1. Student related issues

Step 1

If College Staff members have any concerns or believe:

- a) an inappropriate or dependent relationship is developing, or
- b) the care of student/s is compromised, or
- c) if someone observes what they believe to be such a relationship or situation,

College Staff must talk to a designated contact (relevant Head of School or Counsellor). This includes concerns regarding an MLC student and any member of the MLC community, e.g. staff member, volunteer, contractor or agency worker.

The choice of person will depend on a number of factors such as the nature of the situation, the personal relationships of the College Staff member, the setting and timing. These people will be able to advise the appropriate next step. If the concern falls under the definitions outlined in the Child Protection (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy, there is a specific 'designated contact' to discuss the child protection concern. Please refer to this Policy.

Step 2

If there are concerns that a College Staff member may have breached his or her duty of care to a student, then the relevant Manager or Head of Department must be involved. The relevant Head of School will also be informed. This involvement should be as soon as possible keeping paramount the wellbeing and privacy of the student.

Step 3

The Manager or Head of Department will identify the alleged breach of conduct and will take action in accordance with College procedure relating to that particular breach. This may involve legal action.

8.2. Staff / Adult related issues

If College Staff or parents feel they are being treated in a manner which is unfair, unprofessional or inappropriate by other adults in the MLC community, they should discuss their concerns with



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either the person directly, their Manager, Head of Department, Human Resources or Head of Staff Welfare and Operations (7-12). Parents should make contact with the relevant Head of School.

9. FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have any questions regarding the issues outlined in this policy, please speak with your Manager or a senior member of staff.



MLC RELATIONSHIPS POLICY Volunteer

DOCUMENT DETAILS

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VERSION CONTROL

Version	Date	Description
V1	2009	To meet legislative requirements
V2	2012	Minor update
V3	2016	Minor update
V4	2016	October - Updated to comply with Child Safe Standards

AUDIENCE

All MLC employees, contractors, agency staff and volunteers.