Chairo Christian School

Child Safety

Last Revision: January 2024

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

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 we will create and maintain an environment where the safety of children is a high priority.

These core values are:

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.

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 Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (page 11 in this booklet), which shows how we will engage and communicate with our community, and how we will act and review our actions so we fulfil our responsibilities to keep children safe. Our policy is built around the following pillars:

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

CULTURE

At Chairo, 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

At Chairo, 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 at Chairo 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

At Chairo, 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 at Chairo 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 at Chairo 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

At Chairo, 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.

Reporting Concerns

All members of the Chairo community (including staff members, parents, students, volunteers, third party contractors and external education providers) who have any concerns that a child may be subject to abuse are asked to contact a Child Protection Officer as soon as possible. It is the responsibility of our Child Protection Officers to ensure that appropriate action is taken.

CHILD PROTECTION OFFICERS

Drouin	Judy Linossier	0407 958 062
	Chezelle Conroy	0408 319 396
	David Sollberger	5625 4600
Drouin East	Judy Linossier	0407 958 062
	Di McAllister	0407 287 643
Leongatha	Christine Hibma	0490 027 206
	Mandy Smith	0427 003 345
	Joel Hardy	5662 4355
Pakenham	Louisa Doherty	0408 110 992
	Di McAllister	0407 287 643
	Peter Stebbins	5942 5632
Traralgon	Keryn de Bruyn	0408 527 027
	Tania Katramados	0411 829 660
	Joel Hardy	5173 0500
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 Safety Code of Conduct

This Child Safety Code of Conduct outlines appropriate standards of behaviour for *all* adults towards students at Chairo Christian School.

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. This 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 regarding child protection.
- Ensure, 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.
- Treat all students with respect.
- Promote the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability.
- Recognise that students come from a diverse range of cultural contexts and seek to work collaboratively with students and their families within those contexts.
- Pay particular attention to the cultural safety, participation and needs 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.

- Use positive and affirming language towards students.
- Encourage students to 'have a say' and 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 all 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 to a Child Protection Officer (a Principal or Welfare Chaplain) without delay.

DO NOT:
- Do not engage in any form of inappropriate behaviour towards students or allow students to be exposed to such behaviours.
- Do not display behaviours or engage with students in ways that are not justified by the educational or professional context.
- Do not ignore an adult's overly familiar or inappropriate behaviour towards a student.
- 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, or a student who has graduated from Chairo within the past two years, 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 section 7 of the *Staff & Students Professional Boundaries Policy*).
- Do not communicate directly with a student through personal or private means (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, has prior approval from a Head of School or Principal, or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter
- Do not 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.
- 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.
- Do not consume alcohol contrary to school policy or take illicit drugs under any circumstance in the school environment or at other school events where students are present.

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Replaces: Child Protection and Safety Policy

Policy Number: CHI-002.L1.01.1

Adopted: 15/12/2022   Last Amended: June 2023   Next Review: 2024

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, guides the words and actions of staff members as they partner with families.

1.2. 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 fulfil 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.

1.3. 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.

1.4. Chairo Christian School's *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy* expresses our school's commitment to:
   ● creating and maintaining a child safe organisation, where children and young people experience safety;
   ● developing policies, procedures, practices and systems that promote child protection within the school;
   ● creating a positive and robust child protection culture;
   ● promoting open discussion of child protection issues within the school; and
   ● complying with all laws, regulations and standards relevant to child protection in Victoria.

1.5. This policy provides an overview of Chairo's approach to implementing Ministerial Order 1359 which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

1.6. This policy:
   ● applies to all school staff, volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with students. It also applies to Directors as indicated.
   ● applies in all physical and online school environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations for a student's use (for example, a school camp) and those provided through third-party providers.

1.7. This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is to be read in conjunction with other related school policies and procedures as outlined throughout this document, with particular reference to the Staff & Student Professional Boundaries Policy and the Staff Conduct & Professional Practice Policy.

2. Definitions

2.1. *Act* refers to the Education and Training Reform Act 2006

2.2. *Child* refers to a child or young person who is under the age of 18 years (Child Wellbeing & Safety Act 2005).

2.3. *Child Safety* includes matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to suspicions, incidents, disclosures or allegations of child abuse.

2.4. *Child Abuse* refers to:

   a) any act committed against a child involving: a sexual offence; grooming offences under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958
   b) the infliction, on a child, of: physical violence; serious emotional or psychological harm
   c) the serious neglect of a child.

2.5. *Child-connected work* refers to work authorised by the school governing authority and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present. Working with Children clearance is required by law only for people who engage in child-related work. Schools may also choose to require suitability checks (including Working with Children clearance) for visitors and volunteers engaging in child-connected work.

2.6. *Child-related work* refers to work which usually involves (or is likely to involve) direct contact with a child, irrespective of whether that contact is supervised or not, and in any of the child-related occupational fields listed in the Worker Screening Act (2020). The definition of *direct contact* includes oral, written or electronic communication as well as face-to-face and physical contact. 'Child-related work' may be either paid or unpaid (voluntary). There are exemptions from the Worker Screening Act including people under 18 years of age, parent volunteers whose child ordinarily participates in the activity, sworn police officers, teachers currently registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching, and visiting workers who do not ordinarily reside and perform child-related work in Victoria, among others.

2.7. *Duty of Care* refers to the obligation of all staff working with students to take reasonable steps to protect them from reasonably foreseeable harm.

2.8. *School environment* refers to any of the following physical, online or virtual places, used during or outside school hours and includes:

   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)
   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: camps, approved homestay accommodation; delivery of education and training such as registered training organisations, TAFEs, non-school senior secondary providers or another school; or sporting events, excursions, competitions or other events.

2.9. *School staff*, specifically in a non-government school, refers to an individual working in a school environment who is:
   a) directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority
   b) a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary) engaged by the school governing authority to perform child-related work.

2.10. *School governing authority* refers to:
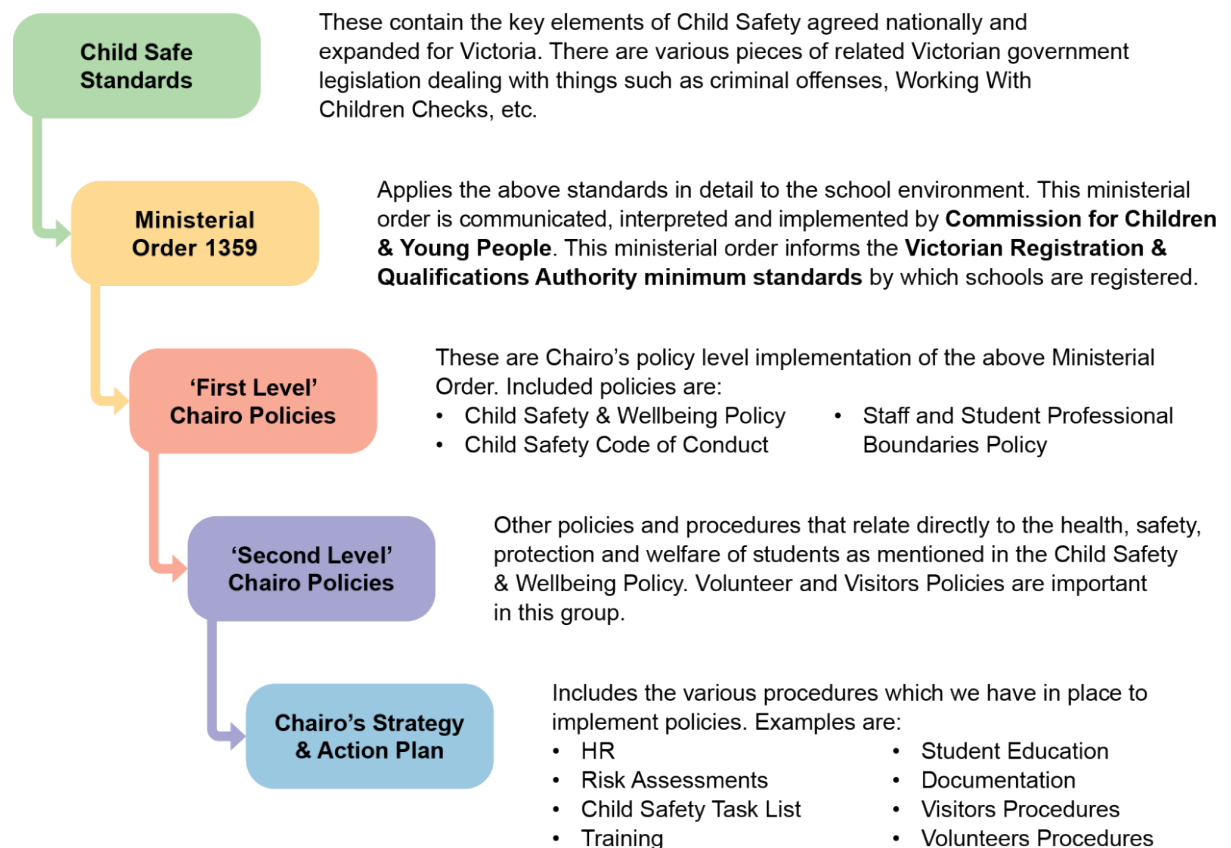   a) the proprietor of a school, including a person authorised to act for or on behalf of the proprietor

b) the governing body for a school (however described), as authorised by the proprietor of a school or the Act

c) the principal, as authorised by the proprietor of a school, the school governing body, or Act.

2.11. *Student* refers to a person who is enrolled at or attends the school.

2.12. *Volunteer* refers to a person who performs work without remuneration or reward for the school.

2.13. *Wellbeing,* as defined by Chairo's Student Wellbeing Model, refers to a sense of peace and is directly related to a view of self, in light of a relationship with God and others. Wellbeing must be considered against a background of how a person sees themselves and functions across all five domains, that includes spiritual, physical, social, cognitive and emotional, recognising the multidimensional nature of wellbeing.

3. Understanding and Leading Child Safety at Chairo

3.1. Chairo's commitment to caring for and protecting the safety of all children entrusted to our care begins with our belief that every person is created by God, in His own image. This belief means that all people, and particularly children, require our care, respect and protection.

3.2. In addition, Chairo is committed to meeting requirements set for the wider community by state and federal governments and agencies.

3.3. These commitments are expressed in Chairo's policies, procedures, practices, systems and plans that promote child protection within the school.

Child Safe Standards

These contain the key elements of Child Safety agreed nationally and expanded for Victoria. There are various pieces of related Victorian government legislation dealing with things such as criminal offenses, Working With Children Checks, etc.

Ministerial Order 1359

Applies the above standards in detail to the school environment. This ministerial order is communicated, interpreted and implemented by **Commission for Children & Young People**. This ministerial order informs the **Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority minimum standards** by which schools are registered.

'First Level' Chairo Policies

These are Chairo's policy level implementation of the above Ministerial Order. Included policies are:
- Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Policy

'Second Level' Chairo Policies

Other policies and procedures that relate directly to the health, safety, protection and welfare of students as mentioned in the Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy. Volunteer and Visitors Policies are important in this group.

Chairo's Strategy & Action Plan

Includes the various procedures which we have in place to implement policies. Examples are:
- HR
- Risk Assessments
- Child Safety Task List
- Training
- Student Education
- Documentation
- Visitors Procedures
- Volunteers Procedures

4. Statement of commitment to child safety

4.1. 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 we will help create and maintain an environment where the safety of children is of the highest priority.

4.2. Chairo's core values are:

4.2.1. Christ-like character. We are being transformed daily through God's word and Spirit, as both individuals and as a community.

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

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

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

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

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

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

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1. At Chairo, all Board and staff members, as well as volunteers, have a shared responsibility for contributing to and ensuring the safety and protection of every child.

5.2. Specific responsibilities can be found in Appendix 13.

> *The Appendices to this policy are not included in this booklet for sake of brevity. The full policy (including Appendices) can be accessed at* **chairo.vic.edu.au/policies-and-reports**.

6. Proactive Measures

6.1. Establishing a culturally safe community

6.1.1. At Chairo, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are acknowledged and respected. We recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety, and invite Aboriginal students and families to have a voice in our school planning and policies.

6.1.2. Further information can be found in Appendix 1.

6.2. Student empowerment

6.2.1. At Chairo, we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their responsibilities and their rights in this area of our community.

6.2.2. Further information can be found in Appendix 3.

6.3. Family engagement

6.3.1. Chairo is committed to partnering with families in all aspects of the school, including the promotion and monitoring of child safety and wellbeing.

6.3.2. Further information can be found in Appendix 4.

6.4. Diversity and equity

6.4.1. At Chairo we value the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on support, wellbeing and transformation for every student.

6.4.2. We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on, and particularly commit to individuals and groups and young people in our community with additional and specific needs.

6.4.3. Further information may also be found in Appendix 5.

6.5. *Suitable staff and volunteers*

6.5.1. Robust child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices are implemented at Chairo to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

6.5.2. Compliance with all applicable child safety legislation, Chairo policy and training requirements is a condition of employment for all staff.

6.5.3. Further information can be found in Appendix 6.

6.6. *Child safety knowledge, skills and awareness*

6.6.1. Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that Chairo directors, staff members and volunteers understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters.

6.6.2. Further information can be found in Appendix 8.

6.7. *Managing risks to child safety and wellbeing*

6.7.1. At Chairo we identify, assess and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online school environments. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices, and in our activity specific risk registers, including for facilities and services we contract through third party providers for student use.

6.7.2. Further information can be found in Appendix 9.

6.8. *Child Safety Code of Conduct*

6.8.1. Chairo's *Child Safety Code of Conduct* (see Appendix 12) sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

6.8.2. We ensure that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the school. For additional information about the Student Code of Conduct, see Appendix 19.

6.9. *Communications*

6.9.1. Chairo is committed to communicating the school's child safety and wellbeing strategies to the school community through:

- ensuring that relevant documents are available on the school website, including the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document) and Child Safety Code of Conduct.

- displaying relevant age-appropriate posters around the school.

- providing updates for parents and guardians through the school's learning management system (e.g. LINC, TASS).

- ensuring that child safety and wellbeing is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings, staff meetings and board meetings, and in volunteer communications.

6.10. *Privacy and information sharing*

6.10.1 Chairo collects, uses, and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws.

6.10.2 For further detail on how Chairo collects, uses and discloses such information see Appendix 17.

6.11. *Records management*

6.11.1   Chairo acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with the *Records Management Policy* and in line with the Standards set out by the Public Records Office Victoria. See Appendix 2 and Appendix 18 for further information.

6.12*. Review of child safety practices*

6.12.1   Chairo has established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices including:

- reviewing and refining the Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy every 2 years or after any significant child safety incident
- analysing all complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice
- acting with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with school staff and our school community.

6.12.2. Further information can be found in Appendix 10.

7.   **Responsive Measures**

7.1.   Complaints

7.1.1.   Chairo seeks to foster a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the school community to raise concerns and complaints in an appropriate manner.

7.1.2.   Further information can be found in Appendix 7.

7.2.   Reporting processes

7.2.1.   Where an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse is raised, all staff and volunteers must follow Chairo's *Child Safety Responding and Reporting Procedures* found in Appendix 15.

7.2.2.   Additional information regarding staff reporting responsibilities see Appendix 16.

8.   **Policy status and review**

8.1.   The Executive Leadership Team is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and appendices and making recommendations to the Board as required in compliance with the Policy Development & Review Policy.

8.2.   Regular reviews will include consultation with students, parents/carers, staff, the Board and relevant agencies as appropriate.

![Chairo Christian School logo]

Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Policy

Policy Number: STA-006.L2.04 Back to <u>Table of Contents</u>

Adopted: 30/07/2016 Last Amended: November 2023 Next Review: 2026

1. <u>**Preamble**</u>

   1.1. This policy applies to all staff, Board directors, volunteers, 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 a member of the Executive or the school's Child Protection Officer..

   1.7. All staff must be aware that the expectations expressed in the Victorian Teaching Profession's Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics will be taken into account by the school's leadership when dealing with concerns or complaints about inappropriate conduct by Chairo staff, whether or not they are registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching

2. <u>**Policy Summary**</u>

   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 (See also Chairo's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy).

   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 an intimate 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 member of the Executive or a Child Protection Officeras 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 very carefully of the implications and potential consequences of engaging in certain behaviours with students, and always err on the side of caution.

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 or personal 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 be aware that professional boundary obligations do not cease when a student graduates from school. For instance, the Victorian Teaching Profession's Code of Conduct states that a professional relationship may be compromised if a teacher has a sexualised relationship with a former student within two years of the student completing their senior secondary schooling or equivalent.

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 more fully within Chairo's *Electronic Communication & Information Technology Policy* and *Social Media Policy.*

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 electronic communication between staff members and students should be via the school systems (e.g. Chario email or Linc) and reflect a professional staff/student relationship;

- staff members should not communicate with students via text message unless it is a method of communication approved for a given context by a Head of School, Deputy or Principal.

- 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. This topic is covered more fully within Chairo's *Restraint of Students Policy*.

8.2. All staff members should be aware that situations may arise that can be perceived in a manner that was not intended.

8.3. In addition, all staff members at the school should adhere to the following guidelines for contact with students both in and outside of school grounds:
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with students.
- Minimal, non-lingering, non-gratuitous physical contact in the context of the situation is acceptable (e.g. congratulatory pat on the back or handshake).
- 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.
- Physical contact may be required during first aid or medical treatment. Again, as appropriate and possible, this needs to be with the consent of the student.

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

10. **Implementation**

10.1. 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.

11. <u>Reporting</u>

11.1. All staff members are to report any concerns about breaches of this policy to a member of the Executive or a Child Protection Officer.

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

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Appendix: Guidelines for thinking about professional boundaries

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 demeanour different from normal when dealing with this particular student?