

	<b>Oakleigh Grammar</b>	
Policy Document Name	Staff Conduct and Professional Boundaries	
Date Ratified by Board of Management	May 2023	
Date for Review	May 2026	

### 1. Preamble

Our School is committed to child safety, preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks. The School is committed to promoting a culture of child safety.

All students have a right to feel safe and to be safe. We want our students to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all children, as well as our teachers, nonteaching staff and volunteers. We are committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children.

Oakleigh Grammar as a zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our rigorous pol

- x concern of potential child abuse
- x managing the risk of child abuse
- x providing support to a child at risk of child abuse and to actively maintain a safe school environment\* both during school hours and outside the school day.

### 3. Scope

This policy applies to all teaching staff, non-teaching staff, Board Members, volunteers, third party contractors and external educational providers.

This document will be read in conjunction with Oakleigh Grammar's:

- x Child Safe Policy
- x Mandatory Reporting Policy
- x ICT Acceptable Use and Social Media Policy
- x Code of Conduct School Community Policy.

Oakleigh Grammar staff 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.

This policy and associated guidelines are designed to outline situations where the blurring of professional boundaries may occur between members of the school community and some strategies to minimise the risk of boundary violations.

This policy will not cover every situation. It is expected that staff will use their professional acumen and own good judgment. If in doubt, staff are encouraged to seek advice from their Head of School or one of the Deputy Principals.

The policy should be reviewed by each staff member annually.

### 3. Professional Conduct

The quality of a staff members' professional conduct is characterised by the quality of the



3c. Staff maintain a professional relationship with parents, guardians and caregivers.

All staff should be respectful of and courteous to parents, guardians, and community members.

Staff should:

- x Consider parents' perspectives when making decisions which have an impact on the education or wellbeing of a student
- x Take appropriate action when responding to parental concerns
- x

- x Respecting a student's privacy in sensitive matters, such as health or family problems, and only reveal confidential matters when or where appropriate, and according to law.
- x Managing student behaviour in a respectful and supportive manner
- x Always making decisions in students' best interests.

#### 4. Professional Boundaries with Students

Professional boundaries are parameters that describe the limits of a relationship in circumstances where a student entrusts their welfare and safety to a staff member, in circumstances where a power imbalance exists.

The fact that School staff 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.

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

- x Would I modify my behaviour if a colleague was present?
- x How would I feel about explaining my actions at a staff meeting?
- x Am I sharing information for the student's benefit, or for my benefit?
- x Am I dealing with this student differently from others in similar circumstances?
- x Is my language or demeanour different from normal when dealing with this particular student?
- x Will I put a child at risk of abuse (eg. by locking doors or meeting in isolated rooms)?
- x Should I assist a child that they can do for themselves eg. such as toileting or changing clothes?

#### 4a. Intimate Relationships

Staff must not initiate or develop a relationship with any student that is or can be interpreted as having a romantic or sexual, rather than professional basis.

The professional relationship of staff and students will be breached by:

- x Flirtatious behaviour or dating
- x Development of an intimate personal relationship either in person or online
- x Sexual relations
- x The use of sexual innuendo, inappropriate language and/or material with students
- x Unwarranted and inappropriate touching
- x Unwarranted and inappropriate filming or photography
- x Deliberate exposure to sexual behaviour of others (e.g. pornography)
- x Having contact without a valid and approved context via written or electronic means (e.g. email, letters, telephone, text messages, social media sites or chat rooms)
- x Going out, whether alone or in company, to social events such as the movies or dinner

- x Exchanging gifts of a personal nature that encourages the formation of an intimate relationship.

Staff 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.

The imbalance of power and authority that exists in the staff/student relationship does not suddenly disappear after the student finishes their schooling. Staff 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.

#### 4b. Personal Relationships

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

An established and expected professional relationship between staff and students may be compromised by staff:

- x Attending parties or socialising with students outside of organised School events (without parental/carer permission)
- x S







## 7. Related Policies

- x Complaints Management Policy
- x Harassment, Discrimination and Grievance Policy
- x ICT Acceptable Use and Social Media Policy
- x Unsatisfactory Work Performance and Misconduct Management
- x Staff Dress Code
- x Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- x Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures (incl. Mandatory Reporting)