



Atlantis Beach Baptist College

Teacher Code of Conduct and Ethics

Title of Policy/Procedure	Teacher Code of Conduct and Ethics
Endorsed by	Principal
Reviewed date	June 2017
Next review date	June 2018
To whom issued	Staff

Teacher code of conduct and ethics

The aim of this Code of Conduct is to support College teaching staff. The Code of Conduct has been developed for Atlantis Beach Baptist College teaching staff and to demonstrate their professional status. In all our dealings we must conduct ourselves in a manner that reflects Christian Principles of compassion, sensitivity, honesty and grace which describe the professional conduct, personal conduct and professional competence expected of a teacher by their colleagues and the College community.

It is based on the values set out in the accompanying Code of Ethics, namely

Integrity

Respect

Responsibility

and relates to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, and Codes of Conduct for teachers (*'Teacher-Student Professional Boundaries – A Resource for WA Teachers'*)

Purpose

The Code of Conduct codifies what is already common practice within the teaching profession. Its purpose is to:

- promote adherence to the values teachers see as underpinning their profession
- provide a set of Christian principles which will guide teachers in their everyday conduct and assist them to solve ethical dilemmas
- affirm accountability of the teaching profession
- promote parental confidence in the ABBC teachers.

The Code of Conduct is not a disciplinary tool.

The Code of Conduct will not cover every situation. There may be policies or procedures set down by the College, or there may be specific issues that are covered by an industrial agreement or award.

The Code of Conduct should be read in conjunction with *'Teacher-Student Professional Boundaries – A Resource for WA Teachers'* published by the Teachers Registration Board of Western Australia (TRBWA), 2017.

Teachers are obliged, as part of their professional conduct, to report breaches or suspected breaches of the Staff Code of Conduct, other than those subject to mandatory reporting obligations, to the College Principal. In the case of serious breaches of the Staff Code of Conduct and with suspected grooming and sexual abuse the Principal will report these to the Board Chair.

Section 1: Professional conduct

Teachers' professional conduct is characterised by the quality of the relationships they have with their students, their students' parents (legal guardians and caregivers), families and communities and their colleagues.

Relationships with students

1.1 Teachers provide opportunities for all students to learn

The main focus of teaching is student learning. Teachers demonstrate their commitment to student learning by:

- a. knowing their students well, respecting their individual differences and catering for their individual abilities
- b. maintaining a safe and challenging learning environment
- c. accepting professional responsibility for the provision of quality teaching
- d. having high expectations of every student, recognising and developing each student's abilities, skills and talents
- e. considering all viewpoints fairly
- f. communicating well and appropriately with their students.

1.2 Teachers treat their students with courtesy and dignity

Teachers:

- a. work to create an environment which promotes mutual respect
- b. model and engage in respectful and impartial language
- c. protect students from intimidation, embarrassment, humiliation or harm
- d. enhance student autonomy and sense of self-worth and encourage students to develop and reflect on their own values
- e. respect a student's privacy in sensitive matters, such as health or family problems, and only reveal confidential matters when appropriate. That is: if the student has consented to the information being used in a certain way to prevent or lessen a serious threat to life, health, safety or welfare of a person (including the student) as part of an investigation into unlawful activity if the disclosure is required or mandated by law to prevent a crime or enforce the law
- f. refrain from discussing students' personal problems in situations where the information will not be treated confidentially
- g. When disciplining a student for poor behavior, teachers must follow the College Student Management Policy. This does not involve any form of corporal punishment.

1.3 Teachers work within the limits of their professional expertise

In fulfilling their role, teachers carry out a wide range of responsibilities. They support students by knowing their strengths and the limits of their professional expertise. Teachers:

- a. seek to ensure that they have the physical, mental and emotional capacity to carry out their professional responsibilities
- b. are aware of the role of other professionals and agencies and when students should be referred to them for assistance
- c. are truthful when making statements about their qualifications and competencies.

1.4 Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with students

In their professional role, teachers do not behave as a friend or a parent. They:

- a. interact with students without displaying bias or preference
- b. make decisions in students' best interests
- c. do not draw students into their personal agendas
- d. do not seek recognition at the expense of professional objectivity and goals.

1.5 Teachers are always in a professional relationship with the students in their school, whether at school or not

Teachers hold a unique position of influence and trust that should not be violated or compromised. They exercise their responsibilities in ways that recognise that there are limits or boundaries to their relationships with students. The following examples outline some of those limits. A professional relationship **will** be violated if a teacher:

- a. has a sexual relationship with a student
- b. uses sexual innuendo or inappropriate language and/or material with students
- c. touches a student without a valid reason
- d. holds conversations of a personal nature or has contact with a student via written or electronic means including email, letters, telephone, text messages, or chat lines, without a valid context. This includes befriending students using social media.
- e. accepts or offers gifts, which could be reasonably perceived as being used to influence them, from students or their parents.

A professional relationship may be compromised if a teacher:

- a. attends parties or socialises with students
- b. invites a student or students back to their classroom or home, particularly if no-one else is present.

Sexual Abuse and Mandatory Reporting

Mandatory reporters must report a belief, based on reasonable grounds in the course of their work, paid or unpaid, that child sexual abuse has occurred or is occurring. This means that teachers working outside of the College grounds are also required to report when working in either a paid or unpaid capacity. For example, tutoring, volunteer teacher at youth centre or working as a Sunday School teacher.

Sexual Abuse, in relation to a child, includes sexual behavior in circumstances where –

- a) the child is a subject of bribery, coercion, a threat, exploitation or violence;
- b) the child has less power than the other person involved in the behaviour: or
- c) there is a significant disparity in the developmental function or maturity of the child and the other person involved in the behaviour.

Failure to make a report can incur a penalty of up to \$6,000.

Please refer to the College Mandatory Reporting Policy

Grooming:

Child grooming has been described in a paper released by the Australian Institute of Criminology, as follows:

Child grooming, a premeditated behaviour intended to secure the trust and cooperation of children prior to engaging in sexual conduct, is a process that commences with sexual predators choosing a location or target area likely to be attractive to children. A process of grooming then commences during which offenders take a particular interest in their child victim to make them feel special with the intention of gaining their trust. As trust is developed between the child victim and the offender, offenders then seek to desensitise child victims to sexual conduct by introducing a sexual element into the relationship.

By virtue of their role, teachers have access to children at school, and sometimes in other locations.

It is important that teachers maintain professional boundaries and refrain from conduct which may be identified as grooming.

It is also important that teachers are able to identify unacceptable conduct in others and feel confident to report it to appropriate authorities if they observe it. **Suspected grooming by a teacher must be reported to the Principal and the Board Chair.**

Identifying the warning signs of grooming

In addition to the behaviours identified in the definition above, often a variety of signals, patterns of behaviour and warning signs are present which may indicate that a teacher has crossed professional boundaries and is grooming a student. Such behaviours include a teacher:

- making a student feel special – for example by spending extra time with the student, arranging to drive the student home, buying the student lunch or other items, asking the student to be a special helper in the class or touching the student unnecessarily, with no clear professional purpose or educational reason.
- focussing on a student who is emotionally vulnerable, for example a student who is having problems with their parents or is new to the school and hasn't established their circle of friends yet.
- attempting to bribe a student into silence about the teacher's inappropriate conduct.
- involving him/herself in a student's home life, for example by gaining the trust of the student's family and becoming involved in the life of the family.
- using social media, without an authorised educational context, to foster an inappropriate relationship with a student.

Relationships with Parents (Legal Guardians, Caregivers), families and communities

1.6 Teachers maintain a professional relationship with parents (legal guardians and caregivers)

Teachers should be respectful of and courteous to parents. Teachers:

- a. consider parents' perspectives when making decisions which have an impact on the education or wellbeing of a student
- b. communicate and consult with parents in a timely, understandable and sensitive manner
- c. take appropriate action when responding to parental concerns.

1.7 Teachers work in collaborative relationships with students' families and communities

Teachers recognise that their students come from a diverse range of cultural contexts and seek to work collaboratively with students' families and communities within those contexts.

Relationships with colleagues

1.8 Collegiality is an integral part of the work of teachers

Teachers demonstrate collegiality by:

- a. treating each other with courtesy and respect
- b. valuing the input of their colleagues
- c. using appropriate forums for constructive debate on professional matters
- d. sharing expertise and knowledge in a variety of collaborative contexts
- e. respecting different approaches to teaching
- f. providing support for each other, particularly those new to the profession and College
- g. sharing information relating to the wellbeing of students.

Section 2: Personal conduct

The personal conduct of a teacher will have an impact on the professional standing of that teacher and on the profession as a whole

Although there is no definitive boundary between the personal and professional conduct of a teacher, it is expected that teachers will:

- a. be positive role models at school and in the community
- b. respect the rule of law and provide a positive example in the performance of civil obligations
- c. not exploit their position for personal or financial gain
- d. ensure that their personal or financial interests do not interfere with the performance of their duties
- e. act with discretion and maintain confidentiality when discussing workplace issues.
- f. Disclosure of Trade Secret, Confidential or Proprietary Information
- g. As staff of the College are representative of the College both within the walls of the College and the wider community. As such the following should be kept in mind:

Political Activity

Dating and Extramarital Affairs

Homosexuality

Socialising with students

Inappropriate posts on social media by self or friends

Criminal, Financial and Litigation History

Use of Drugs and Alcohol

Activities Related to Sexual Orientation

Physical Appearance

Pornography

Other Lifestyle Choices in conflict with the College Christian ethos

Section 3: Professional competence

3.1 Teachers value their professionalism, and set and maintain high standards of competence

Teachers:

- a. are knowledgeable in their areas of expertise
- b. are committed to pursuing their own professional development
- c. complete their duties in a responsible, thorough and timely manner.

3.2 Teachers are aware of the legal requirements that pertain to their profession in particular, they are cognisant of their legal responsibilities in relation to:

- discrimination, harassment and vilification
- duty of care
- negligence
- mandatory reporting
- privacy
- occupational health and safety
- teacher registration

Related policies

- Child Protection Policy
- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- Duty of care to students Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Equal Opportunity, Discrimination and Harassment Policy
- Bullying Prevention Policy
- College Staff Handbook

Teachers Code of Ethics

As teachers, we use our expert knowledge to provide experiences that inspire and facilitate student learning. We are a significant force in developing a knowledgeable, creative, productive and democratic society. The values that underpin our profession are **integrity**, **respect** and **responsibility**.

We hold a unique position of trust and influence, which we recognise in our relationships with students, parents (caregivers and guardians), colleagues and the community.

We demonstrate our **integrity** by:

- acting in the best interest of the students
- maintaining a professional relationship with students, parents, colleagues and the community
- behaving in ways that respect and advance the profession.

We demonstrate our **respect** by:

- acting with care and compassion
- treating students fairly and impartially
holding our colleagues in high regard
- acknowledging parents, legal guardians and carers as partners in the education of their children.

We demonstrate our **responsibility** by:

- providing quality teaching
- maintaining and developing our professional practice
- working cooperatively with colleagues in the best interest of our students.

The purpose of this code is to:

- state the value that guides our practice and conduct
- enable us as a profession to affirm our public accountability
promote public confidence in our profession.