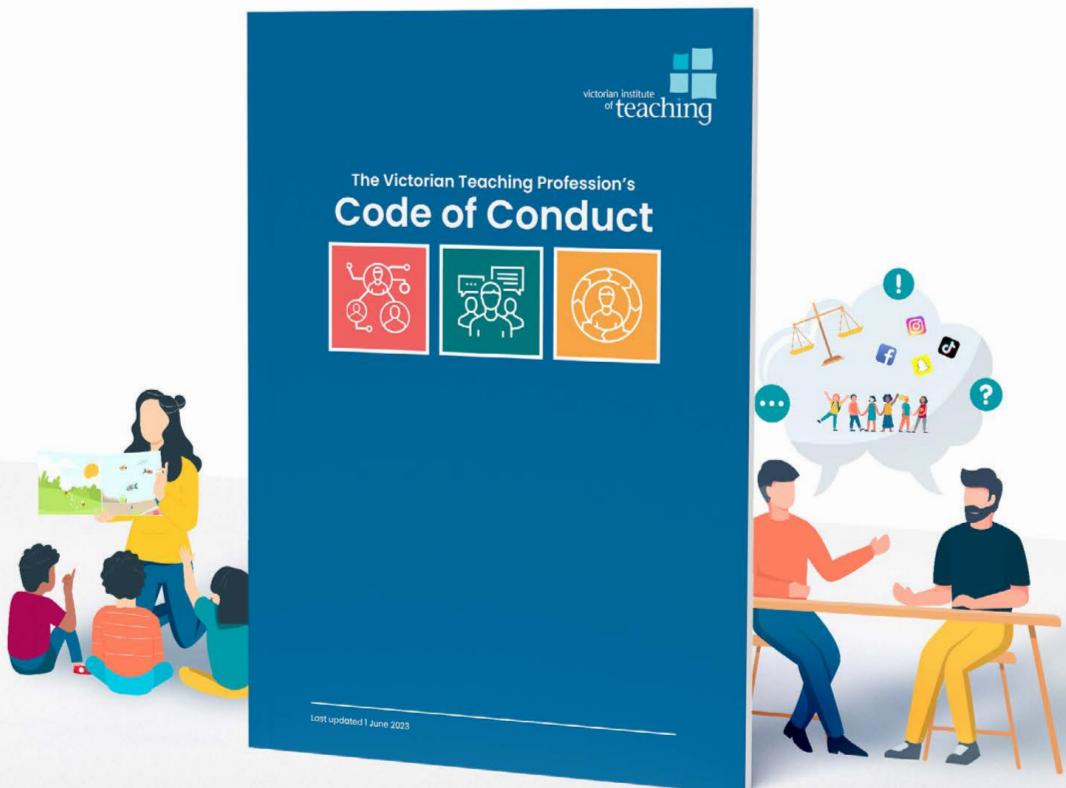


The Code of Conduct
Guidance pack



The Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and pays respect to their continuing connection to land, waters, and community.

We honour the enduring cultures, languages, and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and recognise their custodianship of Country for tens of thousands of years.

The VIT is committed to reconciliation and acknowledges the role of education in truth-telling, healing, and creating a future where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people thrive. We strive to build respectful relationships and embed culturally safe practices across our work.

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Introduction

The Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) must develop, maintain and promote a Code of Conduct for the teaching profession under s2.6.3 of the *Education and Training Reform Act (2006)* (the Act).

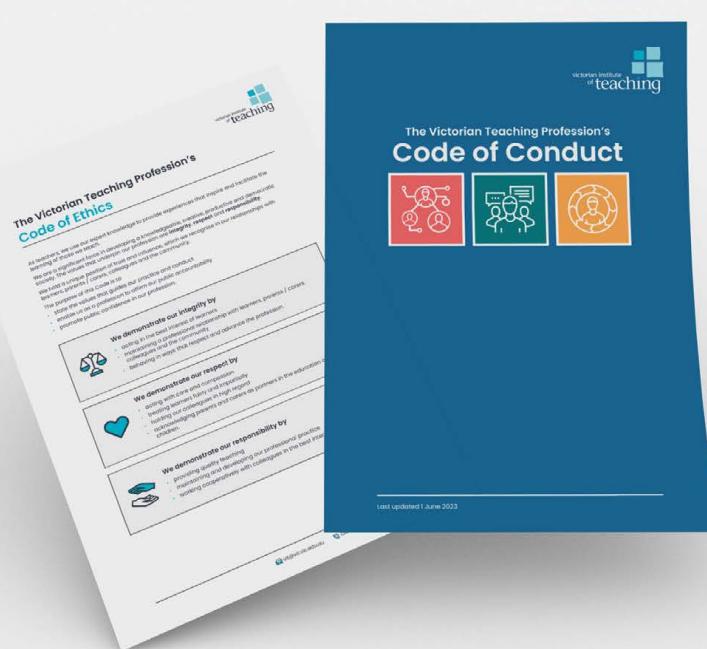
The Victorian Teaching Profession's Code of Conduct identifies a set of principles which describe the professional conduct, personal conduct and professional competence expected of a teacher by their colleagues and community. It is based on the values set out in the Code of Ethics – integrity, respect and responsibility.

The Code of Conduct applies to everyone registered as a teacher and / or early childhood teacher with VIT. This includes teachers who hold provisional registration, full registration, dual registration, permission to teach and non-practising registration. The Code of Conduct applies equally to all registered teachers and / or early childhood teachers regardless of their position in the workplace, including classroom teachers

and those in leadership positions, such as principals.

The Code of Conduct, the Code of Ethics and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) set the standards for teachers in Victoria. The APST cover areas of professional knowledge, practice and engagement. These documents are public statements developed for and by the teaching profession to

- reflect shared principles about practice, conduct and ethics to be applied to promote the highest standards of professional practice
- enable registered teachers to reflect on their ethical decisions
- establish the quality of behaviour that reflects expectations of the profession and community
- provide a clear statement to the community about these expectations of teachers regarding child safety and wellbeing.



How to use the guidance pack

The guidance pack features case studies and their relevant principles, organised by themes. These case studies include reflective questions for each theme that represent current trends in conduct issues occurring across the state. They will be updated annually to reflect any changes in the trends.

Teachers are encouraged to use the guidance pack collaboratively with colleagues to review and reflect on the material. When exploring the case studies, consider how they can be interpreted from different perspectives.

Teachers and workplaces can use one or more case studies for each theme to prompt discussion and reflection on appropriate actions, aligned with their workplace policies and the Code of Conduct. The aim is to not only identify what actions to take, but also to understand how to implement them effectively and why they matter.

To support this process, teachers are encouraged to use VIT's REFLECT ethical decision-making model when reviewing the case studies and answering the reflective questions, applying the model to their own teaching context.

Guidance material

Purpose

This guidance pack is designed to be used alongside the Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics, helping teachers reflect on appropriate professional and personal conduct within their individual context and in line with community expectations. While it provides practical support, it cannot cover every situation – teachers need to apply these principles to their own context and use their professional judgment in each unique circumstance.

BACKGROUND

Background

Under the *Education and Training Reform Act* (2006), the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) is required to develop, maintain and promote a code of conduct for the teaching profession.

The Victorian teaching profession's Code of Conduct (the Code of Conduct) has been developed for and by the Victorian teaching profession, and is intended for all registered early childhood teachers registered with VIT.

The Code of Conduct identifies a set of principles which describe the professional conduct expected of a teacher and the personal competence expected of a teacher by their colleagues and the community. It is based on the principles of the APST's underlying Code of Ethics – integrity, respect and responsibility.

The VIT has a overarching function of providing for child safety and wellbeing, and this underpins the principles set out in the Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct recognises that the teacher-student relationship is not equal: teachers hold a unique position of influence and trust with students that should not be violated or compromised.

As members of a skilled and trusted profession, teachers are responsible for reflecting on their professional conduct and practice, as well as ensuring they meet the standards required of them as set out in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST). It is a requirement of the APST that teachers comply with the Code of Conduct.

This Code of Conduct is complementary to any other relevant policies, procedures or codes of conduct used by a sector or educational institution or other relevant body.

A teacher's professional and personal conduct reflects on the standing of the entire profession. In taking on the responsibility of providing for child safety and wellbeing for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, teachers are often held to a high level of accountability.

PURPOSE

Purpose

The Code of Conduct presents what is directly relevant to practice within the teaching profession in Victoria.

The Code of Conduct

- reflects the important role of teachers in providing for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people
- promotes adherence to the values that teachers see as underpinning their profession
- guides VIT in regulating the teaching profession in a risk-based and proportionate manner
- provides a set of principles to guide teachers in their professional and personal conduct, and assists them with ethical decision making
- strengthens the standing of the teaching profession by ensuring the conduct and practice of registered teachers does not fall short of professional standards
- provides a framework for accountability of the teaching profession
- promotes public confidence in the teaching profession.

The Code of Conduct is not designed to cover every situation. Teachers must use their professional judgement in applying the principles to their individual circumstances.

The Code of Conduct clearly states the expectations placed on teachers by the profession and the community. VIT may consider the Code of Conduct or the Code of Conduct to be grounds for an allegation of misconduct or serious misconduct, or call into question a teacher's fitness to practise. Whether it does will largely depend on the individual circumstances and the context in which the conduct occurred. Any disciplinary measures should always be viewed within the context of what is considered necessary to protect the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

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THE VICTORIAN INSTITUTE OF TEACHING

CODE OF CONDUCT

3

Guidance material

Case studies

These hypothetical case studies are designed to encourage discussion about appropriate professional and personal conduct for teachers, as well as strategies to prevent misconduct.

Outcomes are not provided; each case investigated by VIT is assessed individually, so teachers should use these scenarios to reflect on their own practice within their specific context.

Identify what issues are highlighted by each case study and use the reflective questions to guide further discussion.

Theme 1: Professional boundaries – touching a learner with a valid reason

To ensure for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, teachers should only touch learners for a valid reason. These reasons depend on context – for example, an early childhood teacher may need to touch learners due to the context they are teaching in more often than a VCE high school teacher.

Understanding when touch is necessary in your setting helps avoid inappropriate conduct and ensures learners and the wider community feel safe and comfortable.

The hypothetical case studies highlight the importance of teachers fulfilling their duties in ways that promotes respect, participation and empowerment. Teachers are expected to create opportunities for all learners and maintain professional boundaries, avoiding any physical contact unless there is a valid reason.

Reflective questions

- Do I believe it was necessary to touch a learner in that instance?
- Could I have managed the situations without using physical touch?
- Do I act in the interests of the learner?
- Could my actions make my learners and the wider community feel uncomfortable?
- What steps can I take to ensure my actions reflect my own self-restraint, are purposeful and intentional when interacting with learners?
- Can I identify supports that help ensure my personal beliefs and opinions do not negatively influence my interactions with learners?
- Do I act in a manner that would receive the approval and support from my workplace's leadership?
- Do I know and can I apply behaviour management strategies to create a safe and engaging learning environment?



Case study – Tate

Tate is a grade two teacher in a small country town. In Tate's class, there are learners who have identified disabilities; however, Tate has not been implementing the strategies recommended in the learners' Individual Learning Plans.

Another teacher at the school walks past Tate's classroom just as Tate is trying to get the learners to form a circle for a game. Some of the learners are refusing to join the circle and are instead remaining at the tables.

The teacher observes Tate responding to the defiance by dragging one of the learners, who has non-verbal autism, across the room to join the circle. The teacher who witnessed this scenario notifies the principal.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.1: Teachers provide opportunities for all learners to learn
- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promotes participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.4: Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with learners
- Principle 1.5: Teachers are always in a professional relationship with their learners, whether at the education setting where they teach or not
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism, and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Case study – Ike

Ike is a mathematics teacher in a large suburban high school. This year, Ike has a few learners who challenge Ike's behaviour management strategies.

On one Thursday afternoon, Ike is trying to use low intervention strategies on a learner, Sinead. However, Sinead disregards the strategies and continues to create an almost unmanageable scene for Ike. Sinead thinks the whole situation is a bit of a game and is fooling around, making the class laugh.

Ike asks Sinead to leave as they're clearly not in any mood to learn. Sinead then turns back and moves close to Ike and says, "make me" in response. Ike, without thinking slaps Sinead

across the face and shouts, 'how dare you!'. All the learners in the class gasp and Sinead leaves the room.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.1: Teachers provide opportunities for all learners to learn
- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promotes participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.4: Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with learners
- Principle 1.5: Teachers are always in a professional relationship with their learners, whether at the education setting where they teach or not
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism, and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Case study – Taylor

Taylor is an experienced early childhood teacher in a regional kindergarten who enjoys getting to know the new learners.

One of Taylor's learners, Auggie, has been struggling to interact positively with other learners, often resorting to hitting and kicking them when frustrated.

During inside play time, Auggie and another learner were playing with musical instruments, however both wanted to play with the tambourine. Auggie quickly became frustrated with the other learner, picked up the glockenspiel and goes to hit the other learner over the head with it.

Taylor noticed the escalation and reached them just in time. Taylor instinctively grabbed Auggie's arm to stop them from hitting the learner.

Auggie was surprised and tried to pull their arm from Taylor's grip. Failing to do so, they began to cry. Taylor was able to take the glockenspiel out of Auggie's hand and then remove them from the situation.

Auggie ran away from Taylor and went and got a hug from another teacher. Taylor noticed that Auggie had a mark on their arm from where they had held them.

Taylor recorded the situation and reported the incident to their manager, who in turn spoke to Auggie's parents at pick up.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.1: Teachers provide opportunities for all learners to learn
- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promotes participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.5: Teachers are always in a professional relationship with their learners, whether at the education setting where they teach or not
- Principle 1.7: Teachers work in collaborative relationships with learner's families and communities
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism, and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Case study – Sean

Sean is a VCE visual arts teacher at a regional high school. Sean has a reputation with some learners at the school for being too touchy-feely with the learners during class.

During one class, Sean was helping a learner with their oil painting. Sean was standing behind the learner and helping her to use 'more fluid brush strokes'. The learner requested that Sean stand back a little bit as he was 'breathing down her neck' and 'just standing too close'. Sean took offence to this and stood back with his hands in the air declaring that he was just trying to help. The learner was embarrassed and apologised for upsetting him.

Whilst conducting sketching lessons, Sean requested that a learner model for the class. He arranged the learner in a side-lying position, which made the learner uncomfortable as she was in her school dress and was worried people could see up it. Sean reassured her that no one could see anything yet gave her a blanket 'just in case'.

On another occasion, another teacher visited the art room just as Sean was standing behind a learner as she was painting. The teacher saw Sean brush the learner's hair away from the back of her neck as he peered over her shoulders.

The teacher confronted Sean about the situation and, unsatisfied with his response,

went and spoke to the school leadership team.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.1: Teachers provide opportunities for all learners to learn
- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promotes participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.4: Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with learners
- Principle 1.5: Teachers are always in a professional relationship with their learners, whether at the education setting where they teach or not
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism, and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Case study – Billie

Billie is a grade two teacher in an outer-suburban primary school. Billie loves the challenge of working with learners but, occasionally, they present some behaviours that can be difficult to navigate.

Billie is extremely professional and understands their duty of care. They have also undertaken professional learning around the Code of Conduct and has a good understanding of other professional obligations.

Charli is a nine-year-old learner in Billie's class. They are a lively and passionate child but has shown signs of lack of impulse control in the past.

One recess, Billie is on yard duty when Charli notices their older sibling, Finneas, walking with their class on a school outing. Finneas is on the other side of the road when Charli spots them. Charli runs towards the school gates which were left open after the class had departed, and out towards the road. Billie spots Charli running towards the busy road. Billie grabs Charli's arm and pulls them back just as a car is heading towards them. Charli gets a fright when Billie grabs them, and stumbles backwards, falling over on the footpath. Charli is upset by the incident and complains that their arm, which is showing red marks, is sore and has grazed hands from falling.

Billie reports the incident to the assistant principal and makes notes on the internal school database. At pick up, Billie also explains the incident to the parents, who were grateful for the intervention.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.1: Teachers provide opportunities for all learners to learn
- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promotes participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.4: Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with learners
- Principle 1.5: Teachers are always in a professional relationship with their learners, whether at the education setting where they teach or not
- Principle 1.7: Teachers work in collaborative relationships with learner's families and communities
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism, and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Case study – Morgan

Morgan is a science teacher at a large suburban high school. While walking between classes, Morgan notices a lot of noise in the hall, and a crowd forming. Morgan rushes to the scene and finds two learners engaged in a physical fight. Morgan immediately pushes between them and breaks them apart.

One of the learners, Alex, refuses to stand down so Morgan grips Alex's shoulders while calmly speaking to them to stop them hitting the other learner. Alex is angry and screams at Morgan to let them go, saying that Morgan has no right to touch them.

Once the altercation has been dealt with, Morgan discusses their actions with the principal and request support in following up with the involved families.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.1: Teachers provide opportunities for all learners to learn
- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promotes participation and empowerment

Theme 2: Professional boundaries – communication

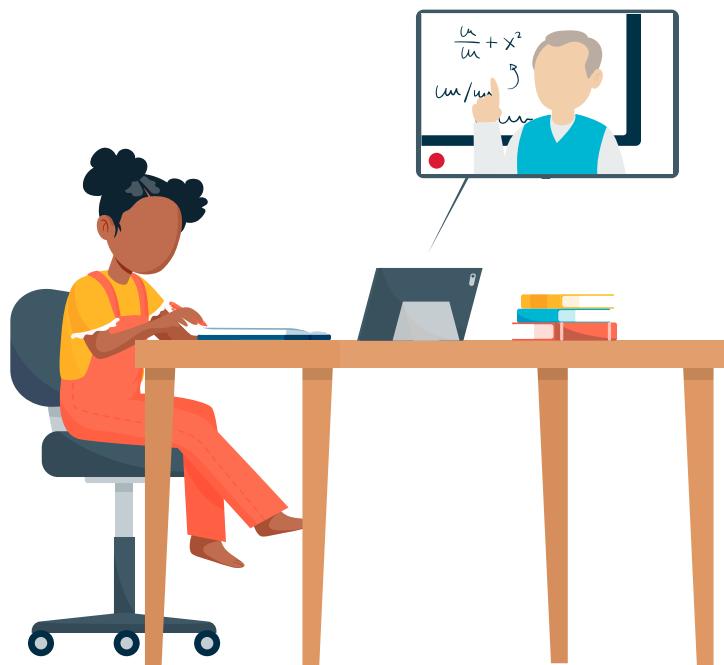
To maintain professional boundaries and ensure for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, teachers should follow their workplace policies on communication with learners, parents, carers, and the wider community.

For example, many workplaces set communication hours (e.g. between 8:30am and 5pm on weekdays) and require teachers to use approved platforms such as workplace email, office phone or workplace management systems to communicate with learners and their families.

Understanding and following these procedures helps teachers avoid inappropriate conduct and ensures learners and the community feel safe and comfortable.

Reflective questions

- Am I using approved platforms to communicate with learners and their families / carers?
- Do I know and understand my workplace's policy concerning communication, including but not limited to, appropriate communication platforms and time periods?
- Is my communication with learners and their families / carers for valid reasons such as regarding the learner's education or wellbeing?
- What steps can I take to help teachers at my workplace maintain professional relationships with learners, parents and carers? Do I also need to explore how to establish procedures to support this?
- Do my actions reflect the needs and interests of my learners?
- Do I act in a manner that would receive the approval and / or support from my workplace's leadership?
- Could my actions make my learners or their families feel uncomfortable?



Case study – Russell

Russell is a VCE French teacher at an F-12 college in regional Victoria. Russell has developed a close relationship with all his learners in his year 12 class, and particularly with one learner, Gracie.

Russell and Gracie use the school internal email system to set up meetings to discuss Gracie's learning as well as practice for her end of year French oral exam.

On one occasion, Russell emails to suggest that Gracie practices at his house after school. This arrangement continues for a few months and the two begin a sexual relationship. Gracie keeps the relationship to herself, she is 17 and consenting, however Russell is her teacher.

After one French session, Gracie's friend Katy comments that Gracie is Russell's favourite and she always get the special treatment. Gracie confesses to Katy that she has been getting more favourable treatment from Russell at his house, but that it's not like that, as she thinks they're really in love.

Katy is unsure what to do in this situation so tells her older sister, who then tells her and Katy's parents.

Katy's parents immediately report the relationship to the principal. The principal reports the serious allegation and reports Russell to the police.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.1: Teachers provide opportunities for all learners to learn
- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promotes participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.4: Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with learners
- Principle 1.5: Teachers are always in a professional relationship with their learners, whether at the education setting where they teach or not
- Principle 1.7: Teachers work in collaborative relationships with learner's families and communities
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism, and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Case study – Adele

Adele is a grade five primary school teacher. After parent teacher interviews, Adele decides to contact one of the single parents of their learners, Dolly, as they 'felt there was a connection' on the night. Adele looked Dolly up on their internal system and got the number for the parent, Harry.

Adele then sent the following text message to the parent, "Hey Harry, Adele here, Dolly's teacher. Hope you don't mind; I got your details off Dolly's contact form. Just wondering if you would be keen to grab a drink with me sometime. I felt like we had a bit of a connection at the interviews the other night? Let me know... x"

Harry responded with, "Hi Adele, I was surprised to see your message there, I'm not sure how I feel about you using my contact information in that way. Either way I'm currently seeing someone, so a drink is out of the question sorry."

Adele responded, "No worries, Harry, you know where to find me if anything else changes...x".

Harry responded, "Sorry, I mustn't have made myself clear, I'm not comfortable with this scenario and would appreciate you only using my contact details to communicate about Dolly. Please do not message me about this again."

Harry also reported the communication to the school.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.4: Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with learners
- Principle 1.6: Teachers maintain a professional relationship with parents / carers
- Principle 1.7: Teachers work in collaborative relationships with learner's families and communities
- Principle 2.1: The personal conduct of a teacher has an impact on the professional standing of that teacher and on the profession as a whole
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism, and set and maintain high standards of competence

- Principle 3.2: Teachers are aware of, and comply with, the legal requirements that pertain to their profession.

Case study – Finn

Finn is a high school performing arts teacher at an inner-city independent college. Finn uses the approved school communication platform, Microsoft Teams, to communicate with learners regarding rehearsals and other specific requirements for upcoming performances.

In preparation for the whole-school production, Finn sends a Teams message late on a Wednesday evening to the two protagonists to request they attend an extra rehearsal to practice their routine. Both respond they can make it and have some back-and-forth banter for the rest of the evening.

For the following weeks leading up to the opening night, Finn and the two learners would engage in messages after school until late in the evening. They share jokes, memes and discuss the day's activities at school.

One of the learners, Elroy, continues to chat to Finn after the production. The two message continually over Teams for the following term. One evening, Elroy's parent notices all the Teams notifications flashing up on Elroy's phone. Elroy pretends it's another learner at the school; however, the parent is suspicious as the messages are clearly from Teams and not another app. Once Elroy is distracted, the parent looks at the phone and notices Finn's name popping up repeatedly.

Elroy's parent is upset and reports the incident to the school.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promote participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.4: Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with learners
- Principle 1.5: Teachers are always in a professional relationship with their learners, whether at the education setting where they teach or not
- Principle 1.6: Teachers maintain a professional relationship with parents /

carers

- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism, and set and maintain high standards of competence
- Principle 3.2: Teachers are aware of, and comply with, the legal requirements that pertain to their profession.

Case study – Sabrina

Sabrina is a grade five teacher at an inner-city college. Sabrina and their colleagues have been planning the first grade five school ski camp to the Victorian alpine region.

At a recent planning meeting, Sabrina asked how the teachers would communicate with the learners to keep them safe and ensure they could reach the teachers in case of an emergency.

Sabrina was unsure what the school policy was on sharing phone numbers and felt uneasy about handing their number out to all the learners.

Sabrina and their colleagues spoke to the school leadership team and decided to use the approved school communication platform, Microsoft Teams, to avoid sharing their personal phone numbers with the learners.

Sabrina also decided to create a policy and procedure for the school outlining the use of phones and personal numbers to ensure other teachers also knew what to do in similar circumstances.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promote participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.4: Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with learners
- Principle 1.5: Teachers are always in a professional relationship with their learners, whether at the education setting where they teach or not
- Principle 1.6: Teachers maintain a professional relationship with parents / carers
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism, and set and maintain high standards of competence

- Principle 3.2: Teachers are aware of, and comply with, the legal requirements that pertain to their profession.

Case study – Malone

Malone is a grade five school teacher in an inner-city primary school. Coincidentally, Malone has taught the same class for the past few years and as such, has developed a strong relationship with all the learners.

Malone's school uses Google classrooms to distribute work to the learners and communicate using the Gmail platform. Malone has told the learners they are welcome to email Malone at any time and Malone will endeavour to get back to them.

One week, a few of the learners told Malone they had made the netball semifinals and wondered if Malone would come watch them play on the weekend. Malone agreed.

On the night before the match, one of the learners, Tyla, emailed Malone saying she's super nervous but glad that Malone is coming to watch. Malone responded and reassured Tyla that she will be amazing and they're looking forward to watching her smash it tomorrow.

The two emailed back and forth a little more and then Malone wished Tyla good luck and ended the communication.

The next day, the team won the game and progressed to the finals. Malone and Tyla emailed back and forth throughout the following week about game strategies. Malone spent a bit of time placating Tyla's nerves as well.

After the team won the finals, Tyla mentioned to her mum she had been emailing Malone and enjoying the conversation. Tyla's mum was a little unsure about this communication so asked to see the emails. Even though the emails were on the approved platform for the school, the emailing had been occurring outside of the approved hours and there had been more than 200 emails between the two over the period.

Tyla's mum was very concerned about the interactions so went to speak to the principal. The principal and leadership team followed it up with Malone.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promote participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.4: Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with learners
- Principle 1.5: Teachers are always in a professional relationship with their learners, whether at the education setting where they teach or not
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism, and set and maintain high standards of competence
- Principle 3.2: Teachers are aware of, and comply with, the legal requirements that pertain to their profession.

Theme 3: Professional boundaries and personal conduct – online interactive platforms including social media

To maintain professional boundaries and protect the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, teachers should keep communication with learners, parents and carers professional and focused on learning.

Adhering to workplace communication policies helps teachers maintain appropriate conduct and understand the boundaries of their relationships with learners. This ensures decisions and actions align with community expectations and uphold professional standards.

Reflective questions

- Do I act in a manner at my workplace, online and in the community that would receive the approval and / or support from my school's leadership?
- Could my actions be perceived to be showing a bias or favouritism?
- Do I understand my role of responsibility towards all learners in my workplace, not simply with those I directly teach?
- Do my actions at my workplace and in the wider community meet community expectations?
- Do I know and understand my workplace's policy concerning communication, including but not limited to, using appropriate communication platforms and adhering to time boundaries?
- What steps can I take to ensure that teachers at my workplace can maintain professional relationships with learners, parents and carers, and / or do I need to explore how to establish procedures to ensure for this?
- Do my actions reflect the needs and interests of my learners?



Case study – Enya

Enya is an early childhood teacher at an inner-city kindergarten. Enya dabbles in modelling to supplement their income. Recently Enya signed a contract with an agency that supplies promotional models to events such as sporting events and music festivals.

Enya was recruited to promote a company at an adult-only event at the Melbourne Exhibition Centre. Enya's uniform for the day was a bikini top with the company name emblazoned across each side of the bikini. Enya thought the event was a lot of fun and took lots of photos for their social media, including photos with 'naked waiters' who were clad in only an apron, as well as others promoting adult toys and experiences.

Enya's social media profile is public because they use it for promotional work and can be easily searched up with their name.

A few years later, Enya was applying for a new job. The new centre searched up their profile and found the images from the promotional event. The new centre felt that Enya's profile didn't represent the role model behaviour they sought in an early childhood teacher, and they didn't get the job.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 2.1: The personal conduct of a teacher has an impact on the professional standing of that teacher and on the profession as a whole
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism, and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Case study – Rocky

Rocky is a teacher in a regional area. Rocky is single and uses an online dating app to connect with locals for casual intercourse. Rocky's profile includes their name, age, profession, along with several identifiable photos – some shirtless and others showing them in only underwear. Their profile indicates that they are only looking for something casual, stating 'I'm a good teacher, I've been known to teach women a thing or two in the bedroom...'.

As dating apps are not well regulated and

do not have the same primary restrictions as other social media platforms, Rocky's profile was found by some learners who had set up a fake profile. The profile was circulated at the school, causing a lot of embarrassment for both Rocky and the school leadership team.

Although Rocky changed their profile, their reputation amongst the school community had been tarnished.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 2.1: The personal conduct of a teacher has an impact on the professional standing of that teacher and on the profession as a whole
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism, and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Case study – Belinda

Belinda is a year seven to nine English teacher at metropolitan high school in Melbourne. Belinda is single and looking for a partner, so has signed up to a dating app. Belinda has a picture of herself and some information about her likes, dislikes and what she's looking for in a relationship.

Belinda is super-liked by a person called Carlisle and after minimal back and forth chat, decided to meet up at a local pub for a drink, to see if they had a connection.

Once Carlisle arrived and they had been chatting for a while, Belinda realised that Carlisle was a year 12 learner at the school she teaches at.

Belinda knew she was slightly older than Carlisle, but he was over 18 and generally a likeable guy, so she decided to continue with the date.

Belinda continued to see Carlisle for the rest of the year but decided to keep their relationship 'on the down low', just in case.

After Carlisle graduated, Belinda decided to upload pictures of the two of them at the beach over the summer. Some of the other teachers saw her relationship and were concerned with the ethics of it and reported it to leadership.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promote participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.4: Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with learners
- Principle 1.5: Teachers are always in a professional relationship with their learners, whether at the education setting where they teach or not
- Principle 2.1: The personal conduct of a teacher has an impact on the professional standing of that teacher and on the profession as a whole
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Case study – Chaka

Chaka is a grade six teacher at a metropolitan F-12 school. Chaka enjoys playing Call of Duty online with friends and, more recently, with new players they've connected with through mutual friends.

Even though Call of Duty has a MA15+ rating, some of the learners at Chaka's school have been playing the game too. They use pseudonyms and have avatar profile pictures.

Coincidentally, they end up playing against each other one evening. During the game, Chaka and the learners communicated through the voice chat function, using strong language as the combat intensified.

The next day at school, Chaka notices some of the learners have the same avatars as the people they were playing against the previous night. Chaka asks the learners about their profiles and if they play Call of Duty at all.

Chaka realises their mistake and requests to speak to leadership about the matter. Chaka also speaks to the learner's parents about their engagement in a game targeted at older children.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.4: Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with learners
- Principle 1.5: Teachers are always in a professional relationship with their learners, whether at the education setting

where they teach or not

- Principle 1.6: Teachers maintain a professional relationship with parents / carers
- Principle 2.1: The personal conduct of a teacher has an impact on the professional standing of that teacher and on the profession as a whole
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Case study – Jackson

Jackson is a legal studies and humanities teacher at a large high school in regional Victoria. One night, Jackson was scrolling through TikTok and he came across a dance video from one of their learners, Shania.

Jackson liked the video and commented, "hilarious, can you teach me this at school?", accompanied by the fire emoji. Shania heart-reacted the comment and responded with, "would love to Jackson, you have rizz". Jackson then went through Shania's account and liked several of her videos.

The next day at school, Shania and a few of her friends tried to teach Jackson the dance and filmed it to upload onto Shania's TikTok tagging Jackson as well. One of Jackson's other learners saw it on their TikTok and showed their parents. The parents then reported it to the school.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promote participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.4: Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with learners
- Principle 1.5: Teachers are always in a professional relationship with their learners, whether at the education setting where they teach or not
- Principle 2.1: The personal conduct of a teacher has an impact on the professional standing of that teacher and on the profession as a whole
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Case study – Teddy

Teddy is a teacher in an inner-city Melbourne high school.

One night, Teddy was scrolling through Instagram and saw some of his learners on his 'For You' page. He clicked on a profile belonging to Olivia, a bubbly year 12 learner in his history class. Olivia had posted several videos using trending sounds while acting out movie scenes, which Teddy found very funny. He liked the videos and decided to follow her.

Olivia and Teddy share many back-and-forth messages about how funny some of the scenes are. However, the messages become flirtier in nature after a few weeks.

Teddy decides to keep their interactions quiet while he's still teaching Olivia but tells her that he wants to make the relationship more serious once she has graduated.

After graduation, the two 'officially' started dating and Olivia made the relationship Instagram official.



Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promote participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.4: Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with learners
- Principle 1.5: Teachers are always in a professional relationship with their learners, whether at the education setting where they teach or not
- Principle 2.1: The personal conduct of a teacher has an impact on the professional standing of that teacher and on the profession as a whole
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Theme 4: Personal conduct – respecting and complying with the law

To ensure teachers' decisions and actions reflect community expectations and maintain professional boundaries, they must respect and comply with the law at all times.

Reflective questions

- Do my actions show that I respect and follow the law?
- Do my actions, inside and outside the workplace, reflect community expectations such as being a positive role model?
- Could my actions outside of the workplace make my learners and the wider community feel uncomfortable?
- Would my actions outside of the workplace receive the approval and / or support from my workplace leadership?
- Am I aware of how my actions, both inside and outside the workplace, affect my professional image?
- Do my actions reflect the needs and interests of my learners?



Case study – Chris

Chris is a grade one teacher in a mid-size primary school in Melbourne. Chris' partner Geri also works at the same school.

Chris's father recently passed away, which was a major shock for both Chris and Geri. Chris began drinking heavily to cope with the loss.

One night, Chris returned from the pub intoxicated and in a bad mood. Chris continued drinking and when Geri asked if they'd had enough, Chris became angry and started yelling at them. Geri told them to calm down and stop shouting, Chris became even more aggravated and lashed out, punching Geri in the face and breaking their nose.

The neighbours heard the commotion and called the police. After receiving medical treatment, Geri chose not to press charges. They decided to stay with a friend to give Chris some space.

Staff learned about the incident the following week at school, and Chris decided to take time off to deal with their issues.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 2.1: The personal conduct of a teacher has an impact on the professional standing of that teacher and on the profession as a whole
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Case study – Natalie

Natalie, a high school teacher in rural Victoria, attended a party with friends and later drove a few of them home. Although they had been drinking, Natalie felt less intoxicated than their friends and believed it was their responsibility to get them home safely.

Natalie took back roads to avoid traffic but was stopped for speeding by a stationary police car. When breathalysed, Natalie recorded a blood alcohol level of 0.1 – well above the legal limit. As a result, Natalie lost their licence and had to appear in court for dangerous driving.

The local news picked up the story and published it in the local newspaper. On top of

the stress of the court case, Natalie also had to manage the media attention surrounding the incident.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 2.1: The personal conduct of a teacher has an impact on the professional standing of that teacher and on the profession as a whole
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Case study – Elton

Elton, a primary school teacher in a regional Victorian town, has developed a gambling habit that is becoming increasingly difficult to control.

The school had a Mother's Day stall for learners to buy presents for their mothers. At recess, one of the parents asked Elton if they could mind the stall while they had a break, and Elton agreed.

As Elton's gambling spiralled out of control, the temptation to take money from the stall became too strong, and they stole a wad of \$20 notes.

When the parent returned, they didn't notice the missing cash immediately but realised what had happened later that day.

The parent reported the issue to the leadership team, who then spoke to Elton. They confessed to the theft but had already spent the money. The school had to report the incident to the police.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.6: Teachers maintain a professional relationship with parents/ carers
- Principle 2.1: The personal conduct of a teacher has an impact on the professional standing of that teacher and on the profession as a whole
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Theme 5: Personal conduct – being a role model

To ensure teachers' decisions and actions reflect community expectations and maintain professional boundaries, they should act as positive role models in the classroom, the community and online.

Reflective questions

- Do my actions, inside and outside the workplace and online, reflect community expectations such as being a positive role model?
- Could my actions outside of the workplace and online, make my learners and the wider community feel uncomfortable?
- Could my actions be perceived to be showing prejudice or discrimination against a group of people?
- Would my actions outside of the workplace receive the approval and / or support from my workplace leadership team?
- Am I aware of the impact my actions inside and outside of the workplace has on my professional image?
- Do my actions reflect the needs and interests of my learners?
- Do I understand the impact of leaving a digital footprint when it comes to platforms such as social media?
- What steps can I take to ensure that teachers at my workplace can maintain professional relationships with learners, parents and carers? Do I need to explore how to establish procedures to support this?
- Do my actions reflect the needs and interests of my learners?



Case study – Guy

Guy is a grade three teacher at an inner-city primary school in Melbourne. Guy was invited to attend a buck's party at the spring racing carnival in Melbourne with a large group of male friends.

On the train ride home, the group were intoxicated and one of the group members engages in a fight with another patron on the train. Soon the entire buck's party joins in on the fight.

The fight is filmed by another distressed passenger and Guy is clearly seen punching another passenger. The footage is posted on social media and is seen by teachers and the leadership team from the school Guy works at.

Although Guy wasn't charged with any offences, their behaviour brought into question their suitability as a role model and was of major concern from the wider community.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 2.1: The personal conduct of a teacher has an impact on the professional standing of that teacher and on the profession as a whole
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Case study – Cosby

Cosby, a primary school teacher in regional Victoria, became deeply interested in an overseas conflict between two countries. After researching the issue, Cosby chose a side. The more they learned, the more anger they felt towards the opposing nation.

A Facebook group called 'Teachers Against (the country)' appeared in Cosby's feed, aligned with their views and part of a larger movement supporting their chosen side. Cosby joined the group and began attending the rallies – first in Melbourne, then locally in their hometown as the issue gained attention and began posting and sharing content on social media.

Cosby's posts highlighted war atrocities and labelled the other nation's leaders as fascists, mass murderers and suggested comparisons

to Hitler. Cosby's posts expressed disdain for all citizens of that nation, calling them willing participants.

To show their support, Cosby wore the nation's colours and placed a sticker on their laptop indicating their political stance. Some of their learners, who had family ties to the opposing side, felt uncomfortable and confided in another teacher, worried Cosby might treat them differently.

The teacher raised the concern with leadership, who then spoke with Cosby about the situation.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promote participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.4: Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with learners
- Principle 2.1: The personal conduct of a teacher has an impact on the professional standing of that teacher and on the profession as a whole
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Case study – Stevie and Lindsey

A charity in regional Victoria hosted a 'Kings and Queens' themed ball. Stevie and Lindsey, teachers at the local primary school, decided to attend and embraced the opportunity to dress up. They chose rock and roll-inspired outfits and went all out with their appearance.

The event had a professional photographer and an Instagram handle for attendees to share photos. While Stevie and Lindsey loved the professional photos, they later discovered several unflattering photos from later in the night. In these photos, both appeared intoxicated, with one showing Stevie leaning over a plate with white powdered lines and another capturing Lindsey in a compromising position with another attendee.

They contacted the photographer to have the photos edited or removed, but many community members had already seen them. As a result, their school leadership scheduled a meeting with Lindsey and Stevie to discuss the night with them.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.6: Teachers maintain a professional relationship with parents / carers
- Principle 2.1: The personal conduct of a teacher has an impact on the professional standing of that teacher and on the profession as a whole
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism and set and maintain high standards of competence.



Theme 6: Legal obligations

To ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, teachers must understand their legal and professional responsibilities and uphold their professionalism. These legal obligations include, but are not limited to, mandatory reporting, other reporting requirements, and the principle of negligence, which includes duty of care.

Teachers need to know how to follow correct procedures to meet these obligations, which can vary depending on the context. For example, supervision is a key part of duty of care, but the level of supervision required changes based on the learners' age and setting – such as on camp, in the playground, or in the classroom. It is essential that teachers understand their responsibilities in every context where they teach and supervise in.

Reflective questions

- Can I identify workplace supports that will help me meet my legal responsibilities as a teacher?
- Do I understand and follow the relevant safety procedures and protocols in my workplace?
- Do I know the steps I can take to ensure relevant safety procedures and protocols are followed correctly?
- Do I know how to seek help when situations arise that could compromise the safety and wellbeing of learners?
- Do I understand my obligations and responsibilities as a mandatory reporter?
- Is my personal relationship with a learner's parent or carer influencing how I interact with them in the workplace?
- Do I act in a way that would earn the approval and support of my workplace leadership?



Case study – Sia

Sia is an early childhood teacher in a long day care setting with three and four year olds. During outdoor play time, one learner begins misbehaving – yelling, throwing sand at others, and refusing to follow Sia's instructions to stop.

Sia tells the learner they must stay outside until they calm down and moves the rest of the group indoors for the next activity. Sia closes the door, leaving the learner unsupervised outside for 25 minutes before letting them back in.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.1: Teachers provide opportunities for all learners to learn
- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promote participation and empowerment
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism, and set and maintain high standards of competence
- Principle 3.2: Teachers are aware of, and comply with, the legal requirements that pertain to their profession.

Case study – Drake

Drake, an early-career primary school teacher, noticed friends using AI for job applications and professional documents. Curious, Drake decided to use AI to draft mid-year learner reports, planning to review and edit them afterwards to ensure accuracy.

Later in the semester, Drake watched a program highlighting how AI tools can misuse input data, leading to serious privacy breaches. Drake was concerned and spoke to their team leader and began investigating whether the information they had entered posed a privacy risk.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.1: Teachers provide opportunities for all learners to learn
- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promote participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.6: Teachers maintain a professional relationship with parents /

carers

- Principle 1.7: Teachers work in collaborative relationships with learners' families and communities
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism, and set and maintain high standards of competence
- Principle 3.2: Teachers are aware of, and comply with, the legal requirements that pertain to their profession.

Case study – Selena

Selena, a geography and homegroup teacher at a secondary school, notices that one of their homegroup learners, Justin, has recently seemed withdrawn. One morning before class, Selena pulls Justin aside to check in. They reveal that their parents have been fighting every night and admits they feel so overwhelmed that they want to hurt themselves to escape the pain.

Instead of referring Justin to the school counsellor, Selena offers to meet with Justin daily 'for as long as it takes' so they can talk through their issues. Justin agrees, and the two meet every day for six months. During this time, Selena suspects Justin is suffering from depression, however, does not report this, believing Justin's mood is improving as a result of their meetings.

One day, Selena is absent from work. Distressed, Justin attempts to self-harm at the school. Another teacher intervenes and immediately reports the incident to the school counsellor and principal.

When the counsellor speaks to Justin, it is revealed that Selena had been providing assistance to Justin, however no records had been kept regarding these engagements. Justin later receives a diagnosis, and Selena is investigated for failing to refer the situation to leadership and appropriate professional bodies.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.1: Teachers provide opportunities for all learners to learn
- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promote participation and empowerment

- Principle 1.3: Teachers work within the limits of their professional expertise
- Principle 1.6: Teachers maintain a professional relationship with parents / carers
- Principle 1.7: Teachers work in collaborative relationships with learners' families and communities
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism, and set and maintain high standards of competence
- Principle 3.2: Teachers are aware of, and comply with, the legal requirements that pertain to their profession.

Case study – Dylan

Dylan is a teacher in a special education school. One of their learners, Janis, has complex issues, so Dylan regularly liaises with family members and outside agencies. Janis's file indicates there is a court order against Janis' father, Mick.

One day, Dylan receives a call from Mick asking for information about Janis. Dylan explains they can't share details with Mick because they are not listed as a contact and there is a court order in place. Mick insists that they are working with Janis' other parent to help Janis and tells Dylan to disregard the court order. Dylan complies and provides the requested information.

Later, Dylan is called to meet with the principal. Janis' other parent has complained that Dylan shared information with an unauthorised person. This breach triggered Mick's violent behaviour, including threats to the other parent.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.1: Teachers provide opportunities for all learners to learn
- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promote participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.3: Teachers work within the limits of their professional expertise
- Principle 1.6: Teachers maintain a professional relationship with parents / carers
- Principle 1.7: Teachers work in collaborative relationships with learners'

- families and communities
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism, and set and maintain high standards of competence
- Principle 3.2: Teachers are aware of, and comply with, the legal requirements that pertain to their profession.

Case study – Britney

Britney, a secondary school teacher at a large metropolitan secondary school, is approached after class by a learner, Lana, who confides that she thinks she may have been abused by her boyfriend, Jay, the previous night. Lana claimed Jay forced himself on her even though she "kind of said no" and didn't really want it.

Britney reassures Lana that she did the right thing by speaking up and promises to help but explains the need to involve others. Lana hesitates, worried about getting Jay into trouble, but Britney stresses the importance of addressing the situation.

As Lana is 16, Britney makes a mandatory report and seeks support from the school wellbeing team to ensure the process is handled appropriately and to provide assistance for both Lana and Jay, as well as themselves.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.1: Teachers provide opportunities for all learners to learn
- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promote participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.3: Teachers work within the limits of their professional expertise
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism, and set and maintain high standards of competence
- Principle 3.2: Teachers are aware of, and comply with, the legal requirements that pertain to their profession.

Case study – Ariana

Ariana is an early childhood teacher at a rural early childhood centre. One of the learners in Ariana's care, three-year-old Mac, is also the child of a colleague. One day, Mac arrives with a bruised and swollen lip. When Ariana asks about the injury, Mac replies, "my parent was angry with me and hit me".

Ariana does not make a mandatory report, believing their colleague would never harm their child. Later, Ariana speaks to the colleague, who admits losing their temper and hitting Mac but assures them it won't happen again.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promote participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.3: Teachers work within the limits of their professional expertise
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism, and set and maintain high standards of competence
- Principle 3.2: Teachers are aware of, and comply with, the legal requirements that pertain to their profession.

Theme 7: Professional responsibilities – collegiality

By demonstrating collegiality, teachers meet the expectations placed on them by the profession and the community. Collegiality is integral to the work of teachers. Collegiality ensures teachers are treating each other with respect, valuing each other's input, sharing expertise and providing support to each other, in particular those new to the profession.

Teachers who fail to demonstrate collegiality, also fail to support the wellbeing and learning of the learners at the workplace, as well as fail to complete their duties in a responsible and thorough matter.

Reflective questions

- Do I understand my obligations and responsibilities in demonstrating collegiality within the workplace?
- Are my actions consistent with the expectations I would have of my colleagues?
- Do I share relevant data and information about learners with my colleagues to support their learning?
- Do I interact with colleagues in ways that respect their individual differences?
- Am I mindful of my actions and language when engaging with colleagues?
- Do I act in a way that would earn the approval and support of my workplace leadership?
- Am I aware of, and do I comply with, expectations relating to professionalism and completing my duties as a teacher responsibly and thoroughly?



Case study – Mariah

Mariah is an early childhood teacher at a regional centre in Victoria. For the past five years, Mariah worked closely with Diana, but when Diana moved to a new centre, a new teacher, Cyndi, was hired.

Cyndi is relatively new to the profession and brings fresh ideas to the centre. Mariah, with years of experience, feels the current approach works well and sees no need for change. In team meetings, Mariah dismisses many of Cyndi's suggestions and insists that Cyndi sticks to the existing lesson plans. When Cyndi asks for information about learners, Mariah tells them it's all on file and Cyndi will need to look it up themselves.

Eventually, Cyndi decides to try a different approach they had used successfully at a previous workplace. When Mariah notices, they confront Cyndi at lunch, angrily telling them they should be grateful for the work already put into plans. Upset, Cyndi reports Mariah's behaviour to the manager.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.1: Teachers provide opportunities for all learners to learn
- Principle 1.8: Collegiality is an integral part of the work of teachers
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Case study – Ozzy

Ozzy is a primary school teacher at a regional F-9 school. Ozzy's child recently started childcare and is struggling with the transition. Concerned, Ozzy frequently checks their phone for updates from the centre and often steps out to make or take personal calls.

Ozzy works in a flexible learning environment with two other teachers, Sharon and Kelly, and regularly leaves the class under their supervision to handle these calls. Ozzy also has yard duty during the second half of recess but has increasingly been late, often requiring reminders to relieve the teacher on duty. As a result, some teachers have missed 10-15 minutes of their break waiting for Ozzy.

Several staff members raised concerns with leadership about Ozzy's time management and professionalism. Leadership followed up

by speaking with Ozzy about the issue.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promote participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.8: Collegiality is an integral part of the work of teachers
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism, and set and maintain high standards of competence
- Principle 3.2: Teachers are aware of, and comply with, the legal requirements that pertain to their profession.

Case study – Brandy

Brandy is a grade one teacher at a regional primary school, and Monica teaches grade two at the same school. They share mutual friends and, as grade-level coordinators this year, were excited about collaborating as young professionals.

Early in the year, Brandy broke up with their long-term partner Mekhi. A few months later, a rumour spread that Monica was now Mekhi. Brandy confronted Monica in the staffroom, and Monica admitted the relationship, apologised, and confessed they hadn't been upfront. Brandy reacted angrily, called Monica derogatory names until another teacher stepped in and told Brandy to walk away.

Over the following weeks, Brandy continued targeting Monica – telling colleagues they were disorganised, claiming learners disliked them, and criticised them for being too strict. Brandy repeatedly interrupted Monica in staff meetings began excluding them from planning for the upcoming athletics carnival, which Brandy was helping to organise.

Eventually, another grade two teacher reported to the principal that the tension between Brandy and Monica was making the workplace uncomfortable.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.1: Teachers provide opportunities for all learners to learn
- Principle 1.8: Collegiality is an integral part of the work of teachers
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism and set and maintain high standards of competence.

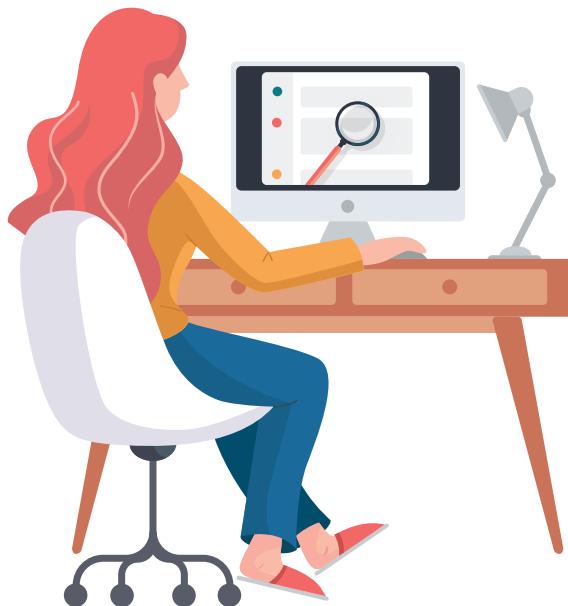
Theme 8: Professional responsibilities – privacy and professionalism

Teachers hold a unique position of trust and influence with learners – a responsibility that should never be violated or compromised. By treating learners with courtesy and dignity, and promoting participation and empowerment, teachers meet the expectations of both the profession and the community.

As part of this responsibility, teachers must protect learners from intimidation, embarrassment, humiliation, and harm. They should also respect a learner's privacy in sensitive matters and only disclose confidential information when appropriate, necessary or required by law.

Reflective questions

- Do I understand my obligations and responsibilities in demonstrating collegiality within the workplace?
- Are my actions consistent with the expectations I would have of my colleagues?
- Do I share relevant data and information about learners with colleagues to support their learning?
- Do I interact with my colleagues in ways that respect their individual differences?
- Am I mindful of my actions and language when engaging with my colleagues?
- Do I act in a way that would receive the approval and support of my workplace leadership?
- Am I aware of, and do I comply with, expectations relating to professionalism and completing my duties as a teacher responsibly and thoroughly?



Case study – Van

Van, an English teacher at a large secondary school in Melbourne's outer suburbs, stopped for coffee before work and ran into Morris, a maths and science teacher from the same school.

They began discussing the previous day's events; when the school went into lockdown after a distressed learner attempted suicide. Van, who teaches the learner, shared details including the learners' name, mental health history and personal background.

Although Van spoke in a hushed tone, the café was close to the school, and several patrons could clearly understand what Van was referring to. Concerned, the café manager called the school principal to report the conversation.

The principal later spoke with Van and arranged professional learning for both Van and Morris on privacy and ethical responsibilities.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promote participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.7: Teachers work in collaborative relationships with learners' families and communities
- Principle 2.1: The personal conduct of a teacher has an impact on the professional standing of that teacher and on the profession as a whole
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Case study – Kylie

Kylie is an early childhood teacher in a four-year old room at a large regional centre. Friendly and well-liked, Kylie enjoys building relationships with parents as much as with the learners.

Outside of work, Kylie often babysits for friends and family and even has business cards with contact details and hourly rate. In an attempt to boost business, Kylie decides to hand these cards out to parents at the centre's gate. A family accepts the offer and

asks Kylie to bring their children to the centre in the mornings.

Another teacher, Dani, notices Kylie arriving with two learners. Kylie explained they babysits them some mornings and brings them into the centre as well. Dani points out this crosses professional boundaries between teachers, learners, and families, and that Kylie should not be monetising these relationships.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.4: Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with learners
- Principle 1.6: Teachers maintain a professional relationship with parents / carers
- Principle 1.7: Teachers work in collaborative relationships with learners' families and communities
- Principle 2.1: The personal conduct of a teacher has an impact on the professional standing of that teacher and on the profession as a whole
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Case study – Miley

Miley is the only teacher at a local childcare centre, working alongside one trained educator.

Outside of work, Miley is an active member of a local sports club and recently joined its members board. During a meeting, the board learns that one of its members has been accused of domestic violence and is subject to an Intervention Order. After discussion, the board decides to take no action, viewing it as a family matter.

Word of the situation spreads throughout the community, and Miley begins receiving questions from parents at the childcare centre. Feeling uncomfortable with the message the club is sending and concerned about their role on the committee, Miley starts questioning their involvement in the committee.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.6: Teachers maintain a professional relationship with parents / carers
- Principle 1.7: Teachers work in collaborative relationships with learners' families and communities
- Principle 2.1: The personal conduct of a teacher has an impact on the professional standing of that teacher and on the profession as a whole
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism and set and maintain high standards of competence.
- on the profession as a whole
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Case study – Freddie

Freddie has lived in a rural Victorian town their entire life. Freddie's family are active in the community – Freddie's parents coach the senior local basketball team, and their younger brother is involved in local events.

After moving to Melbourne for four years to complete teacher training, Freddie returns home to take a job as a PE teacher at the local high school, teaching a mix of year levels, including VCE.

Freddie decided to rejoin their old AFL club and ends up playing on the same team as some of their VCE learners. After the first training session, as Freddie heads toward the clubrooms, they remember that team members often shower in the communal facilities.

Freddie chooses to shower at home instead and speaks to the coach about their decision.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.1: Teachers provide opportunities for all learners to learn
- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promote participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.4: Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with learners
- Principle 1.6: Teachers maintain a professional relationship with parents / carers
- Principle 2.1: The personal conduct of a teacher has an impact on the professional standing of that teacher and

Theme 9: Professional responsibilities – treating learners with dignity

Teachers hold a unique position of trust and influence with learners – a responsibility that should never be violated or compromised. By treating learners with courtesy and dignity, and by promoting participation and empowerment, teachers meet the expectations of both the profession and the community.

As part of this, teachers should create an environment that fosters respect for everyone by modelling impartial, respectful language and behaviour, and by ensuring cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners.

Reflective questions

- Are my actions consistent with maintaining appropriate professional boundaries?
- Do I understand and comply with expectations for completing my duties as a teacher responsibly and thoroughly?
- Am I mindful of confidentiality in all my communications?
- Do I stay within the limits of my professional expertise as a teacher?
- Could my personal beliefs or opinions influence the way I interact with learners?
- Could my actions or words make my learners feel uncomfortable?
- What steps can I take to ensure my personal beliefs and opinions do not negatively impact the my interactions with learners?
- Do I act in ways that reflect community expectations both inside and outside the workplace?
- Do I understand the vulnerabilities of the children and young people in my care?
- Do I understand the important role the Code of Conduct plays in ensuring for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people?



Case study – Alanis

Alanis is a teacher at a local high school with a mixed teaching load. As a form teacher, Alanis also has a pastoral care role and has been working with a family and outside agencies to support a learner who has been engaging in self-harm.

One afternoon, whilst Alanis' laptop was connected to the screen, an email arrives from one of the agencies involved with the learner. The subject line includes the learner's full name and is clearly marked as coming from 'J&S Psychological Services'. The entire class notices and the learner runs out of the room in embarrassment.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promote participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.4: Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with learners
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism and set and maintain high standards of competence
- Principle 3.2: Teachers are aware of, and comply with, the legal requirements that pertain to their profession.

Case study – Ed

Ed is a grade four teacher in a small country town. Their partner works at a local business managed by a prominent family whose child, Alicia, is in Ed's class. Recently, Ed's partner was made redundant as part of cost-cutting measures.

Upset by the family's actions, Ed began subconsciously showing negative feelings towards Alicia. Without realising it, Ed started ignoring Alicia's contributions in class discussions and frequently reprimanded them for talking – even when other learners were also talking.

Alicia and their friends noticed the behaviour and told Alicia's parents, who raised the issue with the principal. The principal spoke with Ed to hear their side of the story. Ed admitted feeling angry toward the family and realised these feelings had been impacting their interactions with Alicia.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.1: Teachers provide opportunities for all learners to learn
- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promote participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.4: Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with learners
- Principle 1.6: Teachers maintain a professional relationship with parents / carers
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Case study – Robbie

Robbie is a primary school teacher who repeatedly asks a specific learner, Bowie, to stop talking. Robbie often reprimands Bowie and makes belittling comments intended as jokes, such as, "You have an extremely penetrative voice" and "I can always hear your voice over everyone else Bowie – it's hard to block out" or "I'm pretty sure everyone in Japan heard you then Bowie."

Robbie's behaviour wasn't intended to cause harm, and they were unaware of the negative impact of the comments. Bowie, however, perceived the comments as intentional and bullying, leading to stress and anxiety.

This behaviour continued for several months until a friend of Bowie informed Robbie about Bowie's distress. Robbie immediately took steps to change their behaviour but did not follow up with Bowie's parents, notify school leadership, or seek advice. As a result, Bowie continued to feel anxious in class for months afterward.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.1: Teachers provide opportunities for all learners to learn
- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promote participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.4: Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with learners
- Principle 1.6: Teachers maintain a professional relationship with parents / carers

- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Case study – Aretha

Aretha, a year nine science teacher, is tasked with teaching a sex education class. During the lesson, they begin making personal comments that stray from the curriculum, including

- “You girls need to learn to look after yourselves when it comes to these things and keep your legs crossed.”
- “Back in my day, we never had sex until we were married. I’m not sure why you Gen Zers are so keen to explore your sexuality at such a young age. Just because celebrities do it doesn’t mean you should too.”
- “Boys, it’s important you don’t ask for sex from girls. They need to look after their virginity because they can’t ever get it back.”

Several girls in the class felt uncomfortable and targeted by these remarks and reported their concerns to the principal. When the principal spoke with Aretha, they admitted making the comments but explained they did so out of concern for learner safety.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.1: Teachers provide opportunities for all learners to learn
- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promote participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.4: Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with learners
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Case study – Whitney

Whitney is a grade four teacher at a regional primary school. With years of experience, Whitney enjoys taking on a caring, pastoral role with learners.

Sometimes, Whitney forgets a learner’s name and uses terms like ‘sweetheart’, ‘darling’ or ‘love’ instead. Most of the learners don’t mind,

but one learner asked Whitney not to use those terms and to call them by their name instead.

Whitney apologised and assured the class they would make a strong effort to remember and use everyone’s correct name.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.1: Teachers provide opportunities for all learners to learn
- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promote participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.4: Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with learners
- Principle 1.5: Teachers are always in a professional relationship with their learners, whether at the education setting where they teach or not
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Case study – Paul

Paul is a secondary school teacher at a rural high school. One of their learners, Ringo, requires extra support due to cerebral palsy. Ringo is charismatic and asks for help when needed but also makes it clear when they want to be independent.

Eager to provide support, Paul frequently checks in to see if Ringo needs assistance. At first, Ringo appreciates the help, but over time begins to feel that Paul doubts their ability to manage even simple tasks.

After class one day, Ringo asks to speak with Paul and explains that constant check-ins feel embarrassing and patronising. Ringo asks Paul to give them a chance to try things on their own before offering help.

Paul responds that they only wanted Ringo to know support was available but agrees to give them more space. At the next lesson, Paul starts to ask if Ringo is okay, then catches themselves and remembers their conversation – choosing instead to let Ringo work independently.

Principles addressed in this case study

- Principle 1.1: Teachers provide opportunities for all learners to learn
- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promote participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.4: Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with learners
- Principle 1.5: Teachers are always in a professional relationship with their learners, whether at the education setting where they teach or not
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Case study – Bonnie

Bonnie is a grade five teacher at a regional primary school and has a learner who identifies as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

To support the learner’s participation and empowerment, Bonnie uses strategies proven to be effective for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners. For example, when introducing new concepts, Bonnie relates the content to real-life experiences.

Bonnie also enrols in professional development courses to upskill and learn additional strategies for engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners.

Principles addressed in this case study

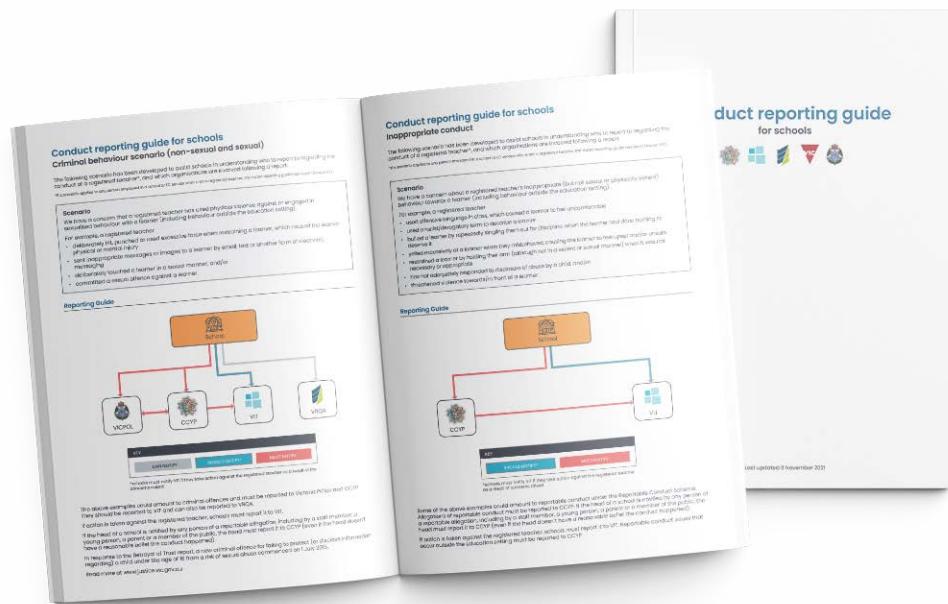
- Principle 1.1: Teachers provide opportunities for all learners to learn
- Principle 1.2: Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity, and promote participation and empowerment
- Principle 1.4: Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with learners
- Principle 1.5: Teachers are always in a professional relationship with their learners, whether at the education setting where they teach or not
- Principle 3.1: Teachers value their professionalism and set and maintain high standards of competence.

Additional resources

View the revised Code of Conduct and further guidance material including case studies, videos, podcasts and professional learning opportunities at www.vit.vic.edu.au/codes.

Conduct reporting guide

The Victorian Institute of Teaching, the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP), the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) and the Victorian Early Childhood Regulatory Authority (VECRA) of the Victorian Department of Education (DE) work with each other as co-regulators who are committed to child safety.



These organisations regularly receive reports regarding the conduct of a registered teacher, school or early childhood service and have developed a conduct reporting guide to assist in understanding who to report to regarding the conduct of a registered teacher, school or early childhood service, and which organisations are involved following a report.

View the conduct reporting guide at www.vit.vic.edu.au/conduct-reporting-guide.

Glossary

Misconduct*

Misconduct in relation to a teacher or an early childhood teacher includes

1. conduct of the teacher or early childhood teacher occurring in connection with the practice of teaching that is of a lesser standard than a member of the public or members of the teaching profession are entitled to expect from a reasonably proficient teacher; and
2. the contravention of, or failure to comply with a condition imposed on the registration of the teacher or early childhood teacher by or under this Part; and
3. the breach of an agreement made under this Act between the teacher or early childhood teacher and VIT.

Serious misconduct

Serious misconduct generally involves a substantial departure from the accepted standards of the profession, including conduct that is found to be

- infamous
- disgraceful
- dishonourable
- shameful.

Fitness to teach*

Fitness to teach in relation to a person, means whether the character, reputation and conduct of a person are such that the person should be allowed to teach in a school or in an early childhood service.

Impairment

Impairment is defined as a

- physical or mental impairment; and / or
- disability, condition or disorder (including substance abuse or dependence).

The VIT is able to investigate if a teacher's ability to practice as a teacher is seriously affected, detrimentally affected or likely to be affected, due to an impairment.

**Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic) pt 2.6.1*

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