Country Education Partnership

Child Safe Code of Conduct

Appropriate standards of behaviour towards children and young people

1. Purpose

Country Education Partnership (CEP) is committed to creating environments where children and young people are safe, respected, included, heard and empowered.

This Code of Conduct establishes the standards of behaviour expected of everyone involved in CEP's work. It aims to:

- protect children and young people from abuse, harm, neglect, exploitation and discrimination;
- promote their wellbeing, participation, cultural safety and empowerment;
- support professional and appropriate relationships between adults and children;
- reduce opportunities for harm in face-to-face, residential, community and online activities; and
- provide clear expectations for responding to concerns and breaches.

This Code should be read alongside CEP's Child Safe Policy, Child Safe Reporting Procedure and other relevant policies.

2. Scope

This Code applies to all CEP representatives, including:

- Committee of Management members and office bearers;
- employees and contractors;
- volunteers, consultants, facilitators and presenters;
- students, interns and trainees;
- partner organisations and people engaged to deliver CEP activities; and
- any other person acting on behalf of CEP who may have contact with children or young people.

For the purposes of this Code, these people are referred to as CEP representatives.

The Code applies wherever CEP representatives are carrying out CEP-related work, including:

- schools, camps, excursions and community settings;
- conferences, workshops, forums and professional learning;
- rural and regional community activities;
- transport, accommodation and residential programs;
- telephone, email, online learning and digital platforms; and
- social media and other online communication.

3. Our commitment

CEP representatives must act in ways that uphold the safety, wellbeing, dignity and rights of every child and young person.

CEP is committed to:

- zero tolerance of child abuse and other forms of harm;
- listening to children and young people and taking their views seriously;
- providing inclusive, physically, emotionally and culturally safe environments;
- recognising the particular needs of children and young people in rural, regional and remote communities;
- supporting children and young people to participate in decisions that affect them;
- respecting diversity, identity, culture, family circumstances and lived experience; and
- continuously improving child safety through learning, consultation and review.

These commitments reflect the reference code's emphasis on safety, participation, wellbeing, empowerment, inclusion and professional boundaries.

4. Expected standards of behaviour

All CEP representatives must:

4.1 Promote safety and wellbeing

- Take all reasonable steps to protect children and young people from physical, emotional, verbal and sexual abuse, harm, neglect, grooming and exploitation.
- Follow CEP's policies, procedures and risk controls.
- Complete required child safety training and maintain any required accreditation or screening.
- Identify and manage child safety risks before and during activities.
- Act promptly when a child or young person appears unsafe, distressed or at risk.

- Ensure activities are appropriately supervised and that children and young people can access help.

4.2 Respect children and young people

- Treat every child and young person with dignity, patience and respect.
- Listen to their views, concerns and ideas.
- Support their right to participate and have a voice in matters affecting them.
- Use age-appropriate, inclusive and respectful language.
- Act in the best interests of the child or young person.
- Recognise that children and young people have different communication, cultural and accessibility needs.

4.3 Promote inclusion and cultural safety

- Welcome and include children and young people regardless of background, culture, language, identity, disability, family circumstances or lived experience.
- Respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures and connections to Country.
- Support culturally safe participation and avoid assumptions or stereotypes.
- Make reasonable adjustments to enable children and young people with disability to participate safely.
- Never discriminate against, shame, humiliate or belittle a child or young person.

4.4 Maintain professional boundaries

- Maintain clear, appropriate and professional relationships with children and young people.
- Ensure contact is necessary, transparent, age-appropriate and connected to CEP's work.
- Use approved communication channels and follow CEP's procedures for contact.
- Avoid situations where a CEP representative is unnecessarily alone with a child or young person.
- Ensure meetings, mentoring and online interactions are appropriately visible and accountable.
- Seek advice when a situation creates uncertainty about professional boundaries.

Professional boundaries are intended to ensure relationships remain appropriate to the role and do not become personal, exploitative or unsafe.

4.5 Respect privacy and confidentiality

- Respect the privacy of children, young people and their families or carers.
- Collect, use, store and share personal information only for legitimate purposes and in accordance with CEP's privacy obligations.
- Obtain appropriate consent for photographs, recordings and communications, where required.
- Never promise a child or young person absolute secrecy where a safety concern may need to be reported.
- Share information only with people who need to know, or where required to protect a child or young person.

4.6 Use technology and social media safely

- Use CEP-approved systems and communication channels wherever possible.
- Keep digital communication professional, transparent and relevant to CEP activities.
- Do not use personal social media accounts to establish inappropriate relationships with children or young people.
- Do not send private, secretive, sexualised or otherwise inappropriate messages.
- Do not request or share inappropriate images, videos or personal information.
- Follow CEP's consent and privacy requirements when photographing, filming or publishing children and young people.
- Never use a personal device to record children or young people where CEP policy prohibits it.

4.7 Report concerns

- Report any concern, allegation, disclosure, observation or suspicion of child abuse or harm in accordance with CEP's Child Safe Reporting Procedure.
- Report suspected breaches of this Code, including "grey area" conduct that may appear inappropriate.
- If a child or young person is in immediate danger, contact emergency services on 000.
- Do not investigate, interrogate or attempt to substantiate an allegation yourself.
- Preserve relevant information and follow CEP's reporting and record-keeping procedures.
- Cooperate with any authorised investigation or response.

If in doubt, report. The reference code similarly requires representatives to report concerns and not undertake detailed investigations beyond clarifying immediate details.

5. Prohibited behaviours

CEP representatives must not:

- Engage in any form of child abuse, grooming, exploitation, harassment or neglect.
- Shame, humiliate, oppress, threaten, intimidate, belittle or degrade a child or young person.
- Discriminate against a child or young person.
- Engage in physical contact that is unnecessary, inappropriate or unwelcome.
- Use physical punishment, intimidation or coercion.
- Be alone with a child or young person unnecessarily or without appropriate approval and safeguards.
- Develop an inappropriate personal, romantic or sexual relationship with a child or young person connected to CEP.
- Give gifts, money or special treatment that could create dependency, favouritism or an inappropriate relationship.
- Personally transport a child or young person unless expressly authorised under CEP procedures and appropriate safeguards.
- Arrange unauthorised contact with children or young people, including through personal phones, messaging apps or social media.
- Use inappropriate, sexualised, discriminatory, derogatory or offensive language in the presence of children and young people.
- Discuss adult or inappropriate topics with children and young people unless clearly necessary, age-appropriate and relevant to the activity.
- Supply alcohol, tobacco, vaping products, drugs or other prohibited substances to a child or young person.
- Photograph, film or record a child or young person without required consent or outside approved procedures.
- Use personal devices to photograph or record children and young people where prohibited by CEP policy.
- Request, access, possess, send or share sexualised images or content involving children or young people.
- Ignore, conceal or discourage the reporting of a child safety concern.
- Retaliate against a person who raises a concern in good faith.

The reference code identifies inappropriate physical contact, unauthorised contact, preferential treatment, personal social media connections, inappropriate language and unauthorised recording as specific prohibited behaviours.

6. Additional expectations for CEP activities

Because CEP may work across schools, communities and rural or regional locations, representatives must take particular care to:

- plan for safe supervision and clear lines of responsibility;
- ensure children and young people know who they can approach for help;
- consider travel, accommodation, transport, isolation and after-hours risks;
- avoid placing children or young people in situations where they are dependent on one adult;
- ensure any overnight or residential activity has appropriate supervision and safeguards;
- consider local community dynamics, privacy and the potential impact of dual relationships;
- use appropriate referral pathways where a child or young person needs support beyond CEP's role; and
- ensure partner organisations and service providers understand and comply with relevant child safety expectations.

7. Responding to a breach or concern

Where a CEP representative becomes aware of a concern or suspected breach, they must:

1. Ensure immediate safety. Contact emergency services on 000 if someone is in immediate danger.
2. Listen and respond calmly. Take the child or young person seriously, avoid judgment and do not promise secrecy.
3. Report promptly. Follow CEP's Child Safe Reporting Procedure and notify the designated Child Safety Officer or other authorised person.
4. Record accurately. Document the concern using the approved incident reporting process, including relevant facts and the child's own words where possible.
5. Do not investigate. Do not question witnesses extensively, confront the alleged person or attempt to determine whether an allegation is true.
6. Follow directions. Comply with any protective, employment, disciplinary, investigative or reporting directions issued by CEP or an appropriate authority.
7. Maintain confidentiality. Share information only through authorised channels.

A breach may result in corrective action, restriction of duties, suspension, termination of employment or engagement, and/or reporting to police or other authorities, as required by law and CEP policy.

8. Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Committee of Management	Endorse the Code, oversee child safety governance and ensure appropriate resources and accountability.
CEO / Executive	Implement the Code, ensure staff and volunteers understand it, and support reporting and response processes.
CEP	Include Child Safety as part of screening process for any new employees. Maintain an activity register for incidents, professional development and all child safe matters.
Managers/activity leaders	Model expected behaviour, manage risks, supervise activities and respond to concerns.
All CEP representatives	Follow this Code, complete required training, maintain professional boundaries and report concerns.
Partners and contractors	Meet CEP's child safety expectations and comply with relevant contractual and legal requirements.

9. Consequences of failing to follow this Code

CEP will take breaches seriously. Depending on the nature and seriousness of the conduct, consequences may include:

- advice, education or corrective action;
- additional training or supervision;
- restriction or removal of duties;
- suspension;

- termination of employment, contract or volunteer engagement;
- referral to police, regulators or other authorities; and
- any other action required under CEP policy or law.

Nothing in this Code prevents CEP from making a report or taking protective action where required.

10. Monitoring, review and continuous improvement

CEP recognises that child safety requires ongoing attention, reflection and improvement.

This Code will be:

- reviewed at least annually;
- reviewed following a serious incident, significant organisational change or relevant legislative or standards changes;
- informed by feedback from children and young people, staff, volunteers, schools, partners and communities;
- supported by regular review of incidents, near misses, risks and training needs; and
- updated and communicated to all relevant people when changes are made.

Children and young people should be invited to contribute to the review of CEP's child safety practices in ways that are safe, accessible and appropriate to their age and circumstances.

The reference code provides for annual review, review after serious incidents or legislative changes, quarterly incident and risk analysis, and consultation with children and young people.

Approved by Committee of Management Date: October 2026

Review planned Date: July 2028