

UNDERSTANDING DET'S VALUES

SCHOOLS GUIDE



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OUR PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM. OUR VALUES A MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY



Few jobs are more important than those in our public schools.

Our public education system has an immeasurable impact on hundreds of thousands of lives each year. Your work provides children and young people with the foundations for a bright future, and in turn shapes the collective prosperity and potential of our state.

I thank you for bringing learning to life for Victoria's children. The community values and trusts public education and is right to have high expectations of us. The way we conduct ourselves, make decisions and interact with our colleagues, students and others is therefore hugely important.

DET's values, and how we live them, go to the heart of the integrity of our public education system.

Living the values shows us at our best and helps achieve the outcomes we seek in building Victoria as the Education State: the learning, engagement and development of children and young people, the growth of their skills and the broadening of their horizons.

I ask you to take the time to read this guide and the set of practical tools designed to help you understand what the Values mean for us.

The tools can be used to apply the Values to ethical dilemmas and challenges that arise in our work.

The right thing to do is not always clear-cut, and the tools are a helpful way to reflect on and guide ethical decision making.

The DET Values are drawn from the Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees, which applies to all corporate and school staff as part of our employment. They complement your school's values and your professional standards, such as the Victorian Institute of Teaching Code of Conduct and Ethics.

We are all extremely privileged to work in a system that makes a real difference. It's up to all of us to bring out the best in ourselves and each other – and maximise the potential for Victorian students.

Gill Callister
Secretary

THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This guide supports staff to understand and demonstrate the values expected of public education staff in Victoria.

The Department of Education and Training (DET) is committed to providing Victorian students with the best possible learning and development experience, and to making our state a smarter, fairer and more prosperous place.

This cannot be achieved without highly professional, capable and *ethical* staff.

DET's Values guide the actions we take, the decisions we make and the interactions we have in performing our public duties.

This guide will help you understand:

- the connection between DET's Values and the Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees
- why the Code of Conduct applies to you, and why you must uphold it as part of your employment with the Department
- the representative behaviours relevant to each value.
- The guide can be used:
 - to support discussions about DET's Values with colleagues
 - as a tool to reflect on the impact you have through your actions
 - to support ethical decision making.

DET'S VALUES AND THE CODE OF CONDUCT

DET has adopted the Public Sector Values which are set out in the Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees (the Code).

DET's Values are Responsiveness, Integrity, Impartiality, Accountability, Respect, Leadership and Human Rights.

The Code is binding on all public sector employees, including all staff working in Victorian Government schools. This means we are all required to demonstrate DET's Values in our work.

A serious failure to uphold the values can result in employment action.

WHY DO WE NEED VALUES?

- Values set expected behaviours:

DET's Values underpin the behaviours that the government and community expect of all school based employees. DET's Values should be demonstrated in everything we do.

- Values provide guiding principles

DET's Values are the guiding principles for every decision we make.

- Values-driven behaviours increase trust and confidence in our work

The public expect us to act in accordance with DET's Values. Doing so is central to building and sustaining trust in the important work we do.

- Values-driven behaviour strengthens our capabilities and improves outcomes:

When school employees act in accordance with DET's Values, it strengthens the school's capacity to operate effectively and achieve its objectives.

DO THE CODE AND VALUES APPLY TO ME?

The Code applies to all staff employed in a Victorian public sector entity (including casual and part-time employees).

Victorian Government Schools are public sector entities, which means that all employees in Victorian Government Schools are public sector employees. Figure 1 shows how schools fit into the Victorian public sector.

The Code – and DET’s Values – apply to all staff in our organisation, including:

- The Secretary of the Department
- The Deputy Secretaries
- Executive Class Officers
- Principal Class Officers
- Teachers
- Education Support Officers
- Victorian Public Servants (VPS)
- Allied Health Professionals
- School Nurses
- Koori Education Officers
- School Council Employees



Figure 1: the composition of the Victorian public sector

Contractors or consultants (including those engaged through an employment agency) are required to comply with the Code and uphold DET’s Values, if they:

- supervise public sector employees
- undertake work that is of a public sector function at a premise or location generally regarded as a public sector workplace
- use, or have access to, public sector resources or information that are not normally accessible or available to the public.

If you manage contractors or consultants then it is your responsibility to ensure they are aware of their obligations to comply with the code and DET’s Values.

HOW DO DET'S VALUES AND THE CODE FIT WITH MY PROFESSION'S STANDARDS AND MY SCHOOL'S VALUES?

Many public education staff, such as teachers, nurses and allied health staff, are also bound by their own professional standards, rules or codes of practice.

For example, teachers are guided by the Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics, developed by the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT). In addition, requirements are also set by the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 and Ministerial Orders made under that act.

School staff are also expected to abide by the values set by their own school communities.

DET's Values and the Code should be read in conjunction with your professional standards and with school-based values. They work in partnership and are complementary.

By upholding DET's Values and the Code you will be acting in a way that is consistent with your professional and ethical standards and school values.



Figure 2: DET's Values work in partnership and are complementary

HOW DET'S VALUES ALIGN WITH THE FRAMEWORK FOR IMPROVING STUDENT OUTCOMES (FISO)

FISO is an evidence-based model that helps schools implement and embed their strategic planning within an effective, continuous improvement cycle.

Under the statewide priority of Professional Leadership is the dimension Vision, values and culture. Through this dimension schools articulate to the whole school community their vision, values, culture, and desired future achievements for student improvement.

DET's Values overlap with, and work in partnership with school values, as well as professional standards and codes. DET's Values describe the behaviours that strengthen the capacity of school staff to achieve FISO objectives.

DET'S VALUES AND THE FISO IMPROVEMENT MODEL



Figure 3: DET's Values align to the Vision values and culture in the FISO Improvement Model

HOW DET'S VALUES SUPPORT YOU IN MAKING ETHICAL DECISIONS

All Department employees in schools and corporate offices are required to work ethically. This is part of our responsibility to uphold the Code of Conduct for Public Sector Employees and live DET's Values. It is critical to maintaining the community's trust and confidence in our public education system.

An ethical decision-making guide is available to support staff to make ethically sound decisions in line with DET's Values. Public officials, including school staff, hold a special position of trust and are accountable for their decisions and actions. There are existing laws and policies, workplace and professional standards and expected capabilities that govern the behaviours of the Department's employees.

The Department's ethical decision-making guide provides a framework that all employees can use when thinking through ethical challenges they face, and make sound choices that align with DET's Values. The model should be applied during the decision-making process – not after a decision is made or to judge the qualities of an action already taken.

A MODEL FOR ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING

Recognise the nature of the issue

- Are you aware of all the ethical components of the situation?
- Consider more than just legal or business concerns

Get the facts

- Take time to get all of the relevant information - most people make the wrong decision when under time pressure or in the absence of all the facts

Evaluate alternative actions

- Know what behaviour is expected of you
- Consider a range of possible options - not just what you've always done, or what everyone else does
- Consult with others

Make a decision

- Choose an option that respects the rights of everyone who has a stake
- Ensure you can realistically act on your choice and that you have the legal authority to make this decision

Test it

- Before acting, test your choice against the code of conduct and our values, the public interest and other expected standards
- Check whether safety is at risk and whether the action complies with law and policies

Act

- Carry out your action, ensuring you do so with attention to the concerns of everyone who will be affected by it
- Record your action and rationale

Reflect on the outcome

- Was the outcome what you intended?
- Would you do anything differently next time?
- Were there unexpected consequences?

RESPONSIVENESS

We respond in a timely way with our best work

Definition

Staff should demonstrate responsiveness by:

- providing frank, impartial and timely advice
- providing high quality services to the Victorian community
- identifying and promoting best practice

Representative Behaviours for DET

We always:

- care about the quality of our services and programs, and aim to be the best
- strive to provide efficient and timely service, honest advice, and information based on all available facts
- remain committed to ensuring that the public has a high quality education system that gives opportunities for all
- strive to make a difference and seek better ways to do our work
- respond promptly and get our work done well
- remain apolitical, ensuring we do not use our positions to support personal political preferences

Conversation starters

How do these behaviours relate to your school values?

When do you or your colleagues demonstrate this value? What are the benefits? How does this behaviour improve outcomes at work?

- *What behaviours represent this value when engaging with:*
- *Your colleagues*
- *Students*
- *Parents*
- *Managers*

INTEGRITY

We are honest, ethical and transparent

Definition

Staff should demonstrate integrity by:

- being honest, open and transparent in their dealings
- using powers responsibly
- reporting improper conduct
- avoiding any real or apparent conflicts of interest
- striving to earn and sustain public trust of a high level

Representative Behaviours for DET

We always:

- spend money wisely for its intended purpose
- ask questions, raise issues, speak up and report unethical behaviour and misconduct
- avoid or manage potential or perceived conflicts of interest
- carry out our work safely and avoid conduct that puts ourselves or others at risk
- deliver on our promises and avoid conduct in our work or personal lives that may diminish the public's trust
- act honestly, openly and consultatively in the performance of our work and use our positions fairly and responsibly

Conversation starters

How do these behaviours relate to your school values?

When do you or your colleagues demonstrate this value? What are the benefits? How does this behaviour improve outcomes at work?

What behaviours represent this value when engaging with:

- *Your colleagues*
- *Students*
- *Parents*
- *Managers*

IMPARTIALITY

We behave in the best interests of the public by making fair and objective decisions

Definition

Staff should demonstrate impartiality by:

- making decisions and providing advice on merit and without bias, caprice, favoritism or self-interest
- acting fairly by objectively considering all relevant facts and fair criteria
- implementing Government policies and programs equitably

Representative Behaviours for DET

We always:

- make decisions based on the best available facts, evidence, information and arguments
- provide clear and proper reasons for the decisions we make
- act fairly, consistently, objectively and with equality (in all our interactions and actions)
- avoid being influenced by offers of gifts, benefits or hospitality and adhere to DET policy
- follow agreed processes and manage issues consistently, fairly and in a timely manner

Conversation starters

How do these behaviours relate to your school values?

When do you or your colleagues demonstrate this value? What are the benefits? How does this behaviour improve outcomes at work?

What behaviours represent this value when engaging with:

- *Your team*
- *Students*
- *Parents*
- *Managers*

ACCOUNTABILITY

We hold ourselves and others to account for the work that we do

Definition

Public officials should demonstrate accountability by:

- working to clear objectives in a transparent manner
- accepting responsibility for their decisions and actions
- seeking to achieve best use of resources
- submitting themselves to appropriate scrutiny

Representative Behaviours for DET

We always:

- use work resources responsibly and appropriately
- engage genuinely with the community
- use, share and disclose information as intended
- consider and accept the consequences of our actions and own our decisions
- know what we need to do in our work and take responsibility to achieve it
- act and make lawful and transparent decisions within our level of authority

Conversation starters

How do these behaviours relate to your school values?

When do you or your colleagues demonstrate this value? What are the benefits? How does this behaviour improve outcomes at work?

What behaviours represent this value when engaging with:

- *Your colleagues*
- *Students*
- *Parents*
- *Managers*

RESPECT

We value others and accept their differences

Definition

Staff should demonstrate respect for colleagues, other public officials and members of the Victorian community by:

- treating them fairly and objectively
- ensuring freedom from discrimination, harassment and bullying
- using their views to improve outcomes on an ongoing basis

Representative Behaviours for DET

We always:

- treat everyone in a considerate, fair and courteous manner
- maintain confidentiality and treat private information properly
- recognise the achievements of others share team success
- listen and encourage everyone to explain ideas and actions
- ensure that everyone has the right tools to do their work
- collaborate and engage constructively with each other working towards a common goal

Conversation starters

How do these behaviours relate to your school values?

When do you or your colleagues demonstrate this value? What are the benefits? How does this behaviour improve outcomes at work?

What behaviours represent this value when engaging with:

- *Your colleagues*
- *Students*
- *Parents*
- *Managers*

LEADERSHIP

We are genuine, supportive and do the right thing

Definition

Staff should demonstrate leadership by:

- actively implementing, promoting and supporting these values

Representative Behaviours for DET

We always:

- act in a genuine and authentic way, modelling DET's Values and support others to do so
- walk the talk and match our actions with our words - others can rely on us to do as we promise
- promote frank and honest discussions and have courage to challenge the status quo
- acknowledge the great ideas of others that improve the way we work
- help others to be accountable for their actions, decisions and their own development
- make choices and take actions that promote a safe working environment for everyone

Conversation starters

How do these behaviours relate to your school values?

When do you or your colleagues demonstrate this value? What are the benefits? How does this behaviour improve outcomes at work?

What behaviours represent this value when engaging with:

- *Your colleagues*
- *Students*
- *Parents*
- *Managers*

HUMAN RIGHTS

We uphold and respect the rights of others

Definition

Staff should respect and promote the rights set out in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities by:

- making decisions and providing advice consistent with human rights
- actively implementing, promoting and supporting human rights

Representative Behaviours for DET

We always:

- are inclusive and embrace equal rights for all
- make sure everyone can be involved, regardless of their circumstances, background, or personal preferences
- respect the rights of others
- report any suspected breaches of human rights
- promote the Charter of Human Rights in all our interactions and activities, with our colleagues, our students, our parents and in our communities

Conversation starters

How do these behaviours relate to your school values?

When do you or your colleagues demonstrate this value? What are the benefits? How does this behaviour improve outcomes at work?

What behaviours represent this value when engaging with:

- *Your colleagues*
- *Students*
- *Parents*
- *Managers*

WHAT HAVE I LEARNT?

The Code of Conduct (the Code) applies to all DET staff, including those working in schools and regional or central offices.

The Code outlines the public sector values which are also DET's values.

DET's Values are

- Responsiveness
- Integrity
- Impartiality
- Accountability
- Respect
- Leadership
- Human Rights

The Code applies to all Victorian Government School employees (including casual and part-time staff).

Contractors and consultants engaged by DET or Victorian Government Schools are required to comply with the Code and DET's Values.

My professional codes of conduct, my school values and DET's Values work in partnership and are complementary.

DET's Values guide the decisions we make, the actions we take and the interactions we have with each other, children, young people and families.

DET's Values describe the behaviours that strengthen the capacity of school staff to achieve FISO objectives.

RESOURCES

You can access a range of resources about DET's Values by visiting

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/workm/Pages/Public-Sector-Values.aspx>

You can access the Ethical Decision-making Guide and Model in the School Policy and Advisory Guide

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/governance/Pages/ethicaldecisionmaking.aspx>