

Child Safe and Wellbeing Policy

1. Purpose

Firbank Grammar School is strongly committed to child safety and wellbeing and to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly environment. This policy outlines the school's commitment and approach to creating and maintaining a child safe environment where all children and young people are safe and feel safe.

Firbank Grammar is committed to ensure all relevant Child Protection and Safety laws, Ministerial Order 1359, regulations and standards in Victoria are upheld.

2. Scope & Definitions

This policy is applicable to:

- All Students (ELC – 12)
- All Staff
- All members of the school community.

This Policy applies in all physical, virtual and online School and Boarding House environments used by students at any time, including all locations provided for a student's use (for example, on-site and off-site School and Boarding House grounds, sporting events, camps, excursions, and environments provided by External Education Providers and other Contractors).

a. Child abuse: Child abuse includes:

- i. sexual offences,
- ii. grooming,
- iii. physical violence,
- iv. serious emotional or psychological harm,
- v. serious neglect and
- vi. a child's exposure to family violence.

A comprehensive list of definitions and key risk indicators can be found in supporting documentation "Definition of Child Abuse and Risk factors 2022".

b. Child-connected work - work authorised by the school governing authority or the provider of school boarding services and performed by an adult in a school or school boarding premises environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

c. Child Safety / Child Safe - Child Safety encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

d. Direct Contact:

The Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic) defines "direct contact" as any contact between a person and a child (aged under 18) that involves:

- i. physical contact;
- ii. face to face contact;
- iii. contact by post or other written communication;
- iv. contact by telephone or other oral communication; or
- v. contact by email or other electronic communication.

Direct Contact staff, Contractors and Volunteers are those who are involved in providing support, guidance and supervision directly to students and could potentially have direct contact with students during the normal course of providing the volunteer service. Examples of Direct Contact Volunteer activities may include volunteers involved in School camps and excursions, coaching sporting teams or assisting in learning activities.

e. Indirect Contact:

Indirect Contact staff and/or volunteers are those people who are involved in providing support and services whilst not directly assisting a specific group of students. An example may be a staff member who performs administrative duties for the school.

f. School environment

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the school;
- online school environments (including email and intranet systems); and
- other locations provided by the school for a child's use (including, without limitation, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, homestays, and other school activities or events)

g. School staff

School staff means an individual working in a school environment who is;

- directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority, whether paid or unpaid;
- a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary) engaged by the school governing authority to perform child-related work; or
- a minister of religion, religious leader or an employee or officer or a religious body associated with the school".

h. Working with Children Check

- Most people, but not everyone, who have contact with children need a Working with Children Check. Under the Worker Screening Act 2020 (the Act), people who are doing child-related

work (and aren't otherwise exempt under the Act) need a Check. To determine if a check is required please refer to: [Working With Children Check](#)

- Teachers with VIT registration: All teachers and early childhood teachers registered with VIT must notify Working with Children Check Victoria (WWCCV) of any child-related work they do outside of their teaching in a school or early childhood service, regardless of whether it is paid or voluntary work. A registered teacher who does child-related work- other than teaching in a school or early childhood service- must notify WWCCV of this work by completing the Teacher notification form.

3. Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Firbank Grammar has zero tolerance for all forms of child abuse and is committed to Child Safety. FGS values diversity and does not tolerate any discriminatory practices. Firbank Grammar demonstrates this commitment through the provision and implementation of various programs and initiatives designed to keep children safe, and to make them feel safe, supported and empowered.

Child Safety is the responsibility of every member of the community. Firbank Grammar School has a responsibility to understand and communicate the important and specific role it plays in Child Safety, to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is maintained.

Our Child Safety policies, procedures, strategies, and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children. The school respects, supports, values and recognises the diverse needs and contributions of students who are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander,
- from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds,
- live with disabilities,
- LGBTQIA +,
- international students and
- In any way defined as vulnerable.

Firbank Grammar School will ensure a culture of Child Safety by:

- Taking a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to Child Safety;
- Ensuring that Child Safety is everyone's responsibility by including all staff, students, families and communities in the schools efforts to keep children and young people safe. This is defined by our Child Safe Code of Conduct, and Staff and Student Professional Boundaries policy.
- Actively managing the risks of child abuse in all school environments, including physical, online, and virtual environments
- Ensuring a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children, young people and students are respected and valued.
- We actively seek to include students, parents and members of our community in decisions that affect them. This includes decisions about organisational planning, delivery of services, management of facilities, and learning and assessment environments.

- We ensure that students know about their rights to safety, information, and participation. We actively seek to understand what makes students feel safe in our School and regularly communicate with students about what they can do if they feel unsafe.
- We recognise the importance of friendships and encourage respectful relationships, strong friendships and support from peers.

Firbank Grammar School will ensure it operates in a Child Safe manner by:

- Ensuring that programs and initiatives are available to meet the needs of all children,
- Educating our students and staff about Child Safety through various programs and initiatives.
- Valuing the input of parents, families and guardians where the focus is primarily on the wellbeing and safety of the child;
- Ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable and encouraged to raise Child Safety concerns;
- Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives;
- Ensuring appropriate provisions are in place for supervision of children;

Firbank Grammar will ensure their staff understand and action their obligations by:

- Providing written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children through the Child Safe Code of Conduct, Staff and Student Professional Boundaries guidance, and Definition of Child Abuse and Risk factors 2022. This is to be supported by delivery of appropriate professional development delivered to staff;
- Ensuring procedures exist to allow only the most suitable people to work with children;
- Ensuring that systems are in place and understood for prompt reporting of suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment to the appropriate authorities;
- Sharing information appropriately and lawfully with other organisation's where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk, and in line with Child Information Sharing (CISS), and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes (FVISS).

4. Relevant Legislation

- a. Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic.)
- b. Ministerial order No 1359 - Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the risk of child abuse in schools and school boarding premises - under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 – This replaces MO 870 on 1 July 2022.
- c. Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005
- d. Crimes Act 1958
- e. Family Violence Protection Act 2008
- f. Wrongs Act 1958 – Section 91 imposes a schools duty of care
- g. In Victoria, the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (PDP Act) protects personal information held by Victorian government organisations. The Commonwealth Privacy Act

1988 protects personal information held by Australian government organisations and large private sector organisations.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

a. **The School Board:**

The School Board is required to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to allow the School's Child Safe Policy and the Child Protection Program to be effectively implemented within the School and are responsible for holding the Principal and the School Leadership Team accountable for effective implementation.

Each member of the School Board is responsible for completing their designated Child Safety and Mandatory reporting Training.

b. **The Principal:**

The Principal is responsible, and will be accountable for, taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Safe Policy and the School's Child Protection Program are implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child protection culture is maintained within the School.

The Principal is responsible for ensuring the development and implementation of risk management strategies that focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks related to child safety and wellbeing in both the physical and online school environments are implemented.

c. **Child Safety Officers:**

Several staff members have been nominated as the School's Child Safety Officers. Our Child Safety Officers receive additional specialised training with respect to child protection issues. They are the first point of contact for raising child protection concerns within the School. They are also responsible for championing child protection within the School and assisting in coordinating responses to child protection incidents. This role is the responsibility of:

- i.* The Head's of Campus for each respective campus
- ii.* Campus specific School Psychologist(s).

d. **Student Group Coordinators:**

- i.* **Indigenous Student coordinators**
- ii.* **International Student coordinators**
- iii.* **Year level Wellbeing Leaders**
- iv.* **PRIDE! Coordinator**
- v.* **other**

The school has dedicated staff whose role it is to support and guide various specific groups of students. Coordinators have various responsibilities, which include supporting and promoting child safety amongst Indigenous Students, students with disability, students from culturally and linguistically

diverse backgrounds, students who are unable to live at home, international students, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) students.

e. All Staff must:

All staff are required to be familiar with the content of our Child Safe Policy and our Child Protection Program and their legal obligations with respect to the reporting of child abuse. It is each individual's responsibility to be aware of key risk indicators of child abuse, to be observant, and to raise any concerns they may have relating to child abuse with one of the School's Child Safety Officers. Staff must be active participants in ensuring a culture or safety, wellbeing, and inclusiveness is implemented.

All staff are required to complete annual training on Child Safety, and Protecting Children - Mandatory reporting and other obligations.

All staff and volunteers, both direct or indirect, are required to provide the school with either valid VIT registration, or a valid Working With Children Check, or relevant qualification to demonstrate they are fit to work with Children.

Any staff member involved in any of the following activities:

- Recruitment of staff (permanent, part time, casual)
- Organising engagement of contractors to work on or around the campuses
- Organising the invitation of guest speakers / teachers to interact with our students
- Organising involvement with external parties for excursions, camps, tours, events, incursions
- Booking of buses or any services for the school

are responsible for ensuring that any person engaged by the school is a fit and proper person to work with Children. Evidence must be sighted and recorded.

f. Students and Parents / Guardians:

Child Safety is everyone's responsibility. All students and families are encouraged to be familiar with this and related policies, guidance, and the FGS Child Safe Code of Conduct.

All students are expected to participate in training provided on Child Safety as determined by the school.

All are encouraged to know the risk indicators of Child Abuse, how to manage and mitigate risks of Child Abuse, and who to contact to report a suspected case of Child Abuse, and who to contact to obtain support.

6. Reporting Child Abuse Concerns

Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000.

a. Failure to Disclose:

Effective from 2014 in Victoria, it is an offense under the *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)* for any adult to fail to disclose to police any reasonable belief that a child under 16 in Victoria has been sexually offended

against by another adult. This offense helps to ensure that protecting children from sexual abuse is the responsibility of the whole community. *For further information on the Failure to Disclose offense, please refer to: [failure-to-disclose-offence](#)*

b. Failure to Protect:

Under the *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)*, those in positions of authority (a responsible person) within the school must take all reasonable steps to remove or reduce the risk of sexual abuse posed by an adult associated with the school. If the responsible person fails to take reasonable steps in these circumstances, this may amount to that person committing a criminal offence. [Link to: failure-to-protect](#)

c. Mandatory reporting:

Mandatory reporting is the requirement, under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)*, for certain professional groups to report a reasonable belief of child physical or sexual abuse to child protection authorities. For our school community, this applies to:

- Registered teachers and early childhood teachers,
- School Principals
- School Psychologists
- School Counsellors
- Nurses
- Early childhood and out of home care workers,
- People in religious ministry

For guidance on what you are required to do, when you have to report and how to report, utilise the following:

- Once you have formed a reasonable belief that child abuse is occurring, then guidance on what to do has been published by:
 - Department of Education: [FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf \(education.vic.gov.au\)](#)
 - Department of Families, Fairness and Housing: [Reporting child abuse - DFFH Services](#)
- For more detailed information, refer to the following document to assist in Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse: [ChildSafeStandard5_SchoolsGuide.pdf \(education.vic.gov.au\)](#)
- Recording your actions: [PROTECT_Schoolstemplate.pdf \(education.vic.gov.au\)](#),

d. Reporting to VIT

Principals must notify the Victorian Institute of Teaching if a registered teacher is charged with, been convicted or found guilty of a category A or category B sexual offence.

e. Victoria Police

Any suspected criminal behaviour must be reported to police. Both Victoria Police and CCYP must be notified if a reportable allegation involves suspected criminal behaviour.

f. Not a reporting obligation, but you still have concerns?

Should failure to disclose or failure to report obligations not apply, or if you are unsure in any way of what to do to ensure Child Safety, please contact any of the School's Child Safety Officers for further assistance and support.

All communication relating to Child Safety will be treated with the utmost discretion and may be required to be shared in line with the Child Information Sharing reforms which came into effect in Victoria on 19th April 2021.

Further information and support can be found through Child First / The Orange Door: [Child and family services information, referral and support teams \(Child FIRST\) - DFFH Services](#)

g. Record all activities relating to reporting using the following:

Department of Education and Training and Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Recording Your Actions: Responding to Suspected Child Abuse, 2016*

7. Related Policies and Procedures

- a. Child Safe Code of Conduct
- b. Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Policy & Guidelines
- c. Definition of Child Abuse and Risk factors 2022
- d. DET training: Protecting Children - Mandatory Reporting and other obligations
<https://elearn.childlink.com.au/login/index.php>
- e. **Identifying, Responding to, and recording of all forms of abuse:** Department of Education and Training and Department of Families, Fairness and Housing,
 - i. Identifying and responding: [Protect: Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools, 2016](#)
 - ii. Actioning: [FourCriticalActions_ChildAbuse.pdf \(education.vic.gov.au\)](#)
 - iii. Recording: [PROTECT Schoolstemplate.pdf \(education.vic.gov.au\)](#) Staff and Students Professional boundaries policy
- f. Working With Children Check: <https://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/>
- g. Appendix 1 - Child Safety Officer contact list - 2022.
- h. [Failure to disclose offence | Department of Justice and Community Safety Victoria](#)
- i. [Failure to protect: a new criminal offence to protect children from sexual abuse | Department of Justice and Community Safety Victoria](#)
- j. Information Sharing Schemes: [Information sharing and MARAM reforms | Victorian Government \(www.vic.gov.au\)](#)
- k. Student Duty of Care Policy (and Supervision)
- l. Volunteer / Contractor / Visitor Policy
- m. Privacy Policy
- n. Appropriate use of ICT Policy
- o. Human Resources Policy
- p. Excursion Management Policy

8. Feedback / Enquiries

The school community may provide feedback on this document by emailing: jwilliams@firbank.vic.edu.au

9. Approvals

- a. **Approved by:** Jenny Williams, Principal.
- b. **Date:** August 2022
- c. **Next Review date:** August 2023

10. Appendix

a. Child Safety Officer Contact List - 2022

Name	Position	Contact No.	Email Address
Leandra Turner	Deputy Principal, Head of Senior School	9591 5188	lturner@firbank.vic.edu.au
Ayles Llewellyn	Deputy Head, Senior School	9591 5188	allewellyn@firbank.vic.edu.au
Sara Groves	Educational Psychologist (Senior School)	9591 5188	sgroves@firbank.vic.edu.au
Mel Smith	Head, Turner House	9591 5141	msmith@firbank.vic.edu.au
Kristy Hamshare	Deputy Head, Turner House	9591 5141	khamshare@firbank.vic.edu.au
Belinda Roberts Scholes	Educational Psychologist (Junior School – Brighton)	9591 5141	brobertsscholes@firbank.vic.edu.au
Brad Nelsen	Head, Sandringham House	9533 5711	bnelsen@firbank.vic.edu.au
Joseph Kenny	Deputy Head, Sandringham House	9533 5711	jkenny@firbank.vic.edu.au
Talia Oliver	Educational Psychologist (Junior School – Sandringham)	9533 5711	toliver@firbank.vic.edu.au