

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Whenever there are concerns that a child is in immediate danger the Police should be called on 000
or the local 24-hour Police Station:
Bayside Police Station Sandringham – 03 8530 5100
Moorabbin Police Station – 03 9556 6565
St Kilda Police station – 03 9536 2666

Purpose

The Firbank Grammar School Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates our school's commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy provides an overview of our school's approach to implementing [Ministerial Order 1359](#) which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

It informs our school community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

NOTE: All references to 'School' or 'Firbank Grammar School' within this policy include all campuses and the School's Boarding Premises Scope

This policy:

- Applies to all campuses of Firbank Grammar School including the Boarding Premises
- applies to all school staff, volunteers and contractors, Ministers of Religion whether or not they work in direct contact with students. It also applies to school council members where indicated.
- applies in all physical and online school environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided by for a student's use (for example, a school camp) and those provided through third-party providers.
- should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes – refer to the related school policies section below.

Definitions

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*".

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 expected to be present.

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.

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:

- physical contact.
- face to face contact.
- contact by post or other written communication.
- contact by telephone or other oral communication; or • contact by email or other electronic communication.

Direct Contact staff, Contractors and Volunteers are those who engage 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.

Indirect Contact

Indirect Contact staff and/or volunteers are those people who engage 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.

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)

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".

Our Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing

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,
- living 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.
- Actively seeking 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.
- Ensuring 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.
- Recognising 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.

- Ensuring 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.
- Valuing and empowering 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. 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).

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 and are responsible for championing child protection within the School.

They work alongside the Risk and Compliance Manager to maintain the Child Safe Standards Risk Register, reviewing annually and after any significant child safety incident.

Child safety officers assist in coordinating responses to child protection incidents.

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
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Child Safety Code of Conduct

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

We ensure that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the school.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

Managing risks to child safety and wellbeing

At our school we identify, assess and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online school environments. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices, and in our activity specific risk registers, such as those we develop for off-site overnight camps, adventure activities and facilities and services we contract through third party providers for student use.

Our Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. Our school leadership team will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

Establishing a culturally safe environment

At Firbank Grammar School, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected. Racism will not be tolerated and any instances of racism within the school environment are addressed with appropriate consequences in line with the Bullying and Intervention Policy, Dignified Behaviour Policy (Junior School) and Behaviour Management Plan.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal students, we recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our school planning, policies, and activities.

We have developed the following strategies to promote cultural safety in our school community:

- A Reconciliation action plan
- Indigenous Program outlines in our Indigenous Curriculum and Wellbeing Programs

Student empowerment

To support child safety and wellbeing at Firbank Grammar School, we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support in the school to ensure a sense of belonging through implementing:

Our 6 Domains:

- Relationships
- Considerations
- Resilience
- Confidence
- Passion
- Adaptability

Our 5 Values:

- Compassion
- Courage
- Integrity
- Curiosity
- Respect

Our 4 Pillars:

- Student Achievement
- Wellbeing
- Strong Community
- Sustainability

We inform students of their rights through, our whole school approach to Respectful Relationships and give them the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students and to speak up and act on concerns relating to themselves or their peers. We ensure our students know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe and we encourage them to share concerns with a trusted adult at any time. Students and families can also access information on how to report concerns at [\[webpage link TBC\]](#).

When the school is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct or abuse of a child, we will listen to the complainant's account and take them seriously, check our understanding of the complaint, support the student, and keep them (and their parents and carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.

Family engagement

Our families and the school community have a vital role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement, at Firbank Grammar School we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our school's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We will create opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.

We do this by:

- Having a clear and visible Child Safety page on our School Website
- Advising the community of our commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing in our School newsletter
- Meeting with parent groups and classroom parent reps to communicate our policies and practices and seek feedback.
- Meeting with key student groups to communicate and seek feedback on all areas of Child Safety and Wellbeing
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school including the Health Centre and Boarding House.

Diversity and equity

As a child safe organisation, we celebrate the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths, and experiences to draw on.

We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal children and young people
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children and young people with disabilities
- children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence.
- international students
- children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

The following school policies and programs provide more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity:

- Diverse Learning needs and Inclusive Access Policy
- Dignified Behaviour Policy
- Relationship and Engagement Commitment
- Gender Inclusivity Policy
- Resilience, Rights and Respectful relationships program

Suitable staff and volunteers

At Firbank Grammar School, we apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

Staff recruitment

When engaging staff to perform child-related work, we:

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance or equivalent background check such as a Victorian teaching registration.
- collect and record:
 - proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications
 - the person's history of working with children.
 - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.
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Staff induction

All newly appointed staff will be expected to participate in our child safety and wellbeing induction program. The program will include a focus on:

- Completion of Child Safety and Wellbeing training (MARAM)
- Review and acknowledgement of our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document)
- Review and acknowledgement of our Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Review and acknowledgement of the Child Safety Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that school leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

Ongoing supervision and management of staff

All staff engaged in child-connected work will be supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.

Staff will be monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. This will be done by completing a working with children check verification upon commencement and each term.

Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our school policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing will be paramount.

Suitability of volunteers

Child safety knowledge, skills, and awareness

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that staff, including volunteers understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters.

In addition to the child safety and wellbeing induction, our staff and volunteers will participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

Staff child safety and wellbeing training will be delivered at least annually and will include guidance on:

- our school's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices
- completing the [Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#) online module annually

- recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students.
- responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm.
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and students including training to enable them to understand the importance of Aboriginal culture to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and students.
- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations.
- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment.

Training on child safety and wellbeing for our volunteers will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues.

School council training and education

To ensure our school council is equipped with the knowledge required to make decisions in the best interests of student safety and wellbeing, and to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment, the council is trained at least annually. Training includes guidance on:

- individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards and managing the risk of child abuse.
- child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment
- Firbank Grammar School child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices
- Annual training to enable them to understand the importance of Aboriginal culture.

Along with annual training the council will also review all child safe practices of the School and provide advice and feedback where required.

Complaints and reporting processes

Firbank Grammar School fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the school community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct or abuse to occur and remain hidden.

We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in our school's Child Safety Complaint Procedure. The Child Safety Complaints Procedure can be found on our website. Our procedures address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school.

All complaints will be taken seriously and investigated immediately. If it is determined there is a child safety and wellbeing incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers (including school council employees and parent helpers) must follow our Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures.

As soon as any immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant school staff have been informed, we will ensure our school follows:

- the [Four Critical Actions](#) for complaints and concerns relating to adult behaviour towards a child
- the [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#) for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending

Communications

Firbank Grammar School is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

- ensuring that key child safety and wellbeing policies are available on our website including the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document), Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedure
- displaying PROTECT posters around the school.
- updates in our school newsletter
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings.

Privacy and information sharing

Firbank Grammar School collects, uses, and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws.

Records management

We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records in accordance with the Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards.

Review of child safety practices

At Firbank Grammar School, we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices.

We will:

- review and improve our policy every 2 years or after any significant child safety incident.
- review our Child Safety risk register annually.
- analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice.
- act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with school staff and our school community.

Related policies and procedures

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is to be read in conjunction with other related school policies, procedures, and codes. These include our:

- Child Safety Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy
- Digital Learning Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Visitors, Volunteers and Contractor Policy
- Reconciliation action plan
- Staff and Students Professional Boundaries policy and guidelines
- Relationship and Engagement Policy

- Recruitment Policy
- Privacy Policy

Related Department of Education and Training policies

- [Bullying Prevention and Response Policy](#)
- [Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes](#)
- [Complaints Policy](#)
- [Contractor OHS Management Policy](#)
- [Digital Learning in Schools Policy](#)
- [Family Violence Support](#)
- [Protecting Children: Reporting Obligations Policy](#)
- [Policy and Guidelines for Recruitment in Schools](#)
- [Reportable Conduct Policy](#)
- [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#)
- [Supervision of Students Policy](#)
- [Visitors in Schools Policy](#)
- [Volunteers in Schools Policy](#)
- [Working with Children and other Suitability Checks for School Volunteers and Visitors](#)

Other related documents

- [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- [Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse – A template for Victorian schools](#)

Policy status and review

The Risk and Compliance Manager is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy at least every two years. The review will include input from staff, students, parents/carers, the boarding house families and students, and the community.

Approval

Approval and Review	Details
Policy issue date August 2023	Document updated by M Hall – Risk and Compliance Manager
Next review date August 2024	Document reviewed by Jenny Williams – Principal, Head of Senior Campus
	Document endorsed by School Board
	Date endorsed September 2023

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



Help for non-English speakers.

If you need help to understand this policy, please contact us at enquiries@firbank.vic.edu.au