

Policy	Friday Night School Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
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Purpose	<p>The purpose of this policy is to outline the Friday Night School's focus on safeguarding children and young people who participate in the Friday Night School and FNS Online against all forms of abuse. This includes safeguarding children and young people against physical, sexual, psychological and emotional abuse or neglect and grooming in person or online. It is intended to complement child protection legislation.</p> <p>All students, teachers, tutors, parents, directors, contractors, visitors, volunteers and participants in the Friday Night School and FNS Online are expected to observe this policy and actively contribute to a culture that respects the dignity of all people involved in the Friday Night School and FNS Online. They are required to observe child-safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children.</p>
Statement of commitment to child safety	<p>The Friday Night School is unequivocally committed to fostering the dignity, self-esteem and integrity of children and young people and providing them with a safe, supportive and enriching environment to develop physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially. The Friday Night School believes in a community where children are safe and have the opportunity to reach their full potential. We promote children's rights as described in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).</p> <p>We are committed to a safe and nurturing culture for all children and young people involved in the Friday Night School.</p> <p>Friday Night School Limited holds the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as central and fundamental to its responsibilities.</p> <p>We want children and young people who are involved in the Friday Night School to be safe, happy and empowered. We have zero tolerance of abuse of children or young people, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously and reported in line with our legal and moral obligations.</p>
Scope	<p>Friday Night School's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy applies to all people who conduct work for, or are connected to, the organisation in a paid or unpaid capacity. This includes Board members, staff, teachers, volunteers, parents, carers and students who act as tutors as well as those receiving tutoring.</p> <p>Friday Night School's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy applies to all activities in the organisation which involve, result in or relate to contact with children.</p>
Responsibilities	<p>The Board of Directors and the Program Director are responsible for ensuring that Friday Night School prioritises children's safety and wellbeing, and that action is taken when anyone raises concerns about children's safety. The Board of Directors and the Program Director will champion and model a child safe culture at Friday Night School, and encourage anyone involved with the organisation to report a child safety concern to the appropriate authorities. Friday Night School values the voices of children and will act on safety concerns raised by children or their families.</p> <p>Friday Night School is a child-centred organisation. We respect the rights of children and provide them with information about their rights, including the right</p>

to be safe at Friday Night School. This is done through our Code of Conduct forms and the provision of posters on the walls at the St Ignatius Parish Hall.

The Board of Directors and the Program Director are responsible for conducting an annual review to establish how effectively Friday Night School is delivering child safety and wellbeing. The input of people involved with Friday Night School is sought as part of this review.

Definitions

“Child, student or young person” includes children and young people under the age of 18 years.

“Child Abuse” as defined in the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) means:

- A sexual offence committed against a child;
- An offence such as grooming committed against a child under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic);
- Physical violence against a child;
- Causing serious emotional or psychological harm to a child;
- Serious neglect of a child.

“Child safe culture” means the shared attitudes, values and practices of the Friday Night School that prioritise the safety of children.

“Child Safety Officer” is the role within the Friday Night School responsible for training others in implementing the Child Safe Standards.

“Child Safety Person” is the nominated person or persons that people within the Friday Night School community can go to with any child concerns or complaints whose name or names are available on the Friday Night School website.

“Concern” is any potential issue that could impact negatively on the safety and wellbeing of a child.

“Complaint” is an expression of dissatisfaction to the Friday Night School related to one or more of the following:

- Services or dealings with individuals by the Friday Night School;
- Allegations of abuse or misconduct by a staff member, volunteer or another individual associated with the Friday Night School;
- Disclosures of abuse or harm made by a child;
- The conduct of a child at the Friday Night School;
- The inadequate handling of a prior concern;
- General concerns about the safety of a group of children or activity.

“Cultural rights” are the rights of each child (either individually or as part of a group of people) to develop and express their background, customs, social behaviour, language, religion or spirituality, beliefs and way of living.

“Cultural safety” is the positive recognition and celebration of cultures. It is more than just the absence of racism or discrimination and more than ‘cultural awareness’ and ‘cultural sensitivity’. It empowers people and allows them to contribute and feel safe to be themselves.

“Disability” means:

- The total or partial loss of a body part or a bodily function (such as mobility, sight or hearing);
- The presence in the body of organisms that may cause disease;
- Malformation or disfigurement;
- A mental or psychological disease or disorder;
- Learning difficulties.

Disability may be permanent, non-permanent or an increased chance of developing a disability in future. Disability also includes behaviour that may be a symptom or expression of disability even if that disability is not formally diagnosed.

“Disclosure” is the process by which a child conveys or attempts to convey that they are being, or have been, abused. Disclosure can be verbal, non-verbal or indicated through behaviour. A disclosure may be accidental or intentional, partial or complete and victims may disclose in different ways to different people throughout their lives.

“Empowerment” involves equipping children with the skills and knowledge to make informed decisions and enabling them to increase control over their lives. It builds up children and strengthens their confidence in themselves and in Friday Night School.

“Equity” is a state of fairness in which all children are equal and can participate fully and safely in Friday Night School regardless of their background, characteristics and beliefs. It requires an understanding that some children have different needs and may require different supports or assistance to feel safe, well and to fully participate.

“Families” means people who make up the family unit for a child and can be made up of a very wide variety of relationships, including those who are related by blood, marriage, adoption, kinship or other extended family structures. Families may include people who share in the daily tasks of living or share a very close, personal relationship.

“Governance” is the leadership, oversight and accountability processes of Friday Night School and includes the Constitution and rules as to who has authority to make decisions, how decisions should be made and monitored and how people are to be held to account.

“Human rights” are all the rights of children, including those in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic) and includes a child’s rights to safety, information and participation in Friday Night School.

“Online environments” are any technological platforms which Friday Night School uses or controls such as computers, phones, websites, intranet, social media and video conference facilities regardless of where such platforms may be accessed by children.

“Staff” means a person engaged by Friday Night School as an employee, worker, contractor, officer or office holder, regardless of whether that person’s role relates to children.

“Standards” means the Child Safe Standards Victoria commencing 1 July 2022

“Volunteer” means any person engaged by Friday Night School who provides a service without receiving a financial benefit, regardless of whether their role relates to children and includes for the purpose of this policy tutors, foster carers and kinship carers. There is no minimum period of engagement to be considered a volunteer.

The Friday Night School Board is responsible for ensuring that all involved with the Friday Night School comply with the requirements of the Standards by:

Policy Statement:

- a) establishing culturally safe environments in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children, young people and students are respected and valued
- b) ensuring that child safety and wellbeing is embedded in Friday Night School leadership, governance and culture
- c) ensuring that children, young people and students are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
- d) ensuring that families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing
- e) ensuring that equity is upheld, and diverse needs respected in policy and practice
- f) ensuring that people working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice
- g) ensuring that processes for complaints and concerns are child focused
- h) ensuring that staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training
- i) ensuring that physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children, young people and students to be harmed
- j) ensuring that implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved
- k) ensuring policies and procedures document how Friday Night School is safe for children, young people and students.

Relevant legislation and standards

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic);
- Child Safe Standards Victoria
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 (Vic)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)
- Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic) especially Part XIII – Organisational liability for child abuse
- Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme Ministerial Guidelines
- Child Information Sharing Scheme Ministerial Guidelines

Related organisational documents

- Student Code of Conduct
- Parent/Guardian Code of Conduct
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Friday Night School Risk Management Checklist
- Friday Night School Privacy Policy

Access to the policy

A copy of the policy can be requested. All requests to be made to the Program Director on 0415 034 548, or at sheena@fridaynightschool.org

The policy can be accessed on the Friday Night School website; www.fridaynightschool.org

Policy status and review

The Friday Night School Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy was approved by the Board of Directors on 25/08/2022, with immediate effect.

If further information or assistance with this policy is required, including in the event of identifying breaches of the policy, please contact the Program Director on 0415 034 548, or at sheena@fridaynightschool.org

Friday Night School's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy will be reviewed on 24/08/2023.

Cultural safety for Aboriginal children

Child Safe Standard 1: *Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued.*

Aboriginal people have distinct cultural rights to enjoy their identity and culture; maintain the use of their language; maintain their kinship ties; and maintain their relationship with the land, waters and other resources with which they have a connection under traditional laws and customs.

When Friday Night School has any Aboriginal children enrolled, either as students or tutors it is committed to having an inclusive and welcoming physical and online environment for Aboriginal children and their families and ensuring a culturally safe environment in which the identities and experiences of Aboriginal young people are respected and valued and that any instances of racism are identified, confronted and addressed with appropriate consequences.

A commitment to child safety and wellbeing

Child Safe Standard 2: *Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.*

- Friday Night School is a child-centric organisation, and is committed to ensuring a safe and nurturing culture for all children and young people involved in the Friday Night School.
- Child Safety requirements are discussed at each Friday Night School Board meeting, and action taken if necessary. Child Safety Standards' policy and processes are reviewed annually, or as required.
- A Code of Conduct outlining child safe standards is given to each student, parent, tutor and teacher involved in the Friday Night School. It is ensured that each party understands the

standards of behaviour expected when involved with the School. Each party signs the Code of Conduct before participation in the School. Breaches of the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action, including termination of a person's involvement with the School.

- Friday Night School leadership champion and model a child safe culture at Friday Night School, focusing on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks to children and encouraging anyone involved with the organisation to report a child safety concern. Any concern raised will be followed through and appropriate action taken.
- Friday Night School staff and volunteers understand their obligations on information sharing and record keeping.
- Friday Night School has an established complaints process. We will acknowledge and investigate all complaints and take all necessary action to rectify and prevent similar issues in the future.
- Friday Night School will ensure that child safety training is provided for all staff and volunteers.

Taking child participation and empowerment seriously

Child Safe Standard 3: *Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.*

- Students are provided with information about their rights, including the right to be safe at Friday Night School. This is done through our Code of Conduct forms and the provision of posters on the walls at the St Ignatius Parish Hall.
- Staff and volunteers are provided with information to help them understand, recognise and act on signs of child abuse or harm.
- Staff and volunteers are supported to develop knowledge and skills to help children participate, express their views and raise their concerns.
- Friday Night School supports children to develop social connections and friendships with their peers, build skills in children to support their peers and challenge bullying or isolating behaviour between children.
- Friday Night School work to create a positive culture around reporting so that people feel comfortable to raise concerns. This is done through conversations with students and families, and by providing each family with a card containing contact information on who to speak with if they have any concerns about safety.

Involving families and communities

Child Safe Standard 4: *Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.*

- Friday Night School welcomes families being able to participate in decisions about the safety and wellbeing of their children with opportunities provided for feedback on policies relating to child safety and wellbeing and seriously takes their views into account.
- A Code of Conduct outlining child safe standards is given to each student, parent, tutor and teacher involved in the Friday Night School. It is ensured that each party understands the standards of behaviour expected when involved with the School.

- Translators are used to ensure that families who do not speak English fluently understand the rights of children to be safe within Friday Night School, and their responsibilities in promoting a child-safe culture.
- Code of Conduct forms are available in English, Vietnamese and Arabic.

Respecting equity and diversity

Child Safe Standard 5: *Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.*

- Friday Night School welcome and support participation of all children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, understands their diverse circumstances and provides support and responds to those who are vulnerable.
- Friday Night School pays attention to the needs of children with disability and respects children and young people from diverse heritage and cultural backgrounds equally, including customs, dress and religious commitments.
- Children and young people have access to information, support and complaints processes that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand.
- Through our enrolment forms families are given the opportunity to provide information about themselves, including any specific needs they may have in order to participate fully in our programs
- Friday Night School has zero tolerance of racism and other forms of discrimination and take action if discrimination or exclusion is identified

Ensuring that staff are suitable and supported

Child Safe Standard 6: *People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.*

- All adults who are in contact with students, including adult volunteers, parents, tutors, staff and Board members must have an up-to-date Working with Children Check card, registration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching or equivalent background checks.
- All adults who are in contact with students, including adult volunteers, parents, teachers and tutors must sign a Code of Conduct ensuring they are aware of the child-safe practices in place at Friday Night School, and the requirement that they must uphold these practices.
- All adults who are in contact with students are aware of their responsibility to children and young people and must treat everyone in the Friday Night School community with respect (modelling positive and respectful relationships and acting in a manner that sustains a safe educational, tutoring and pastoral environment).

Child-focused complaint systems

Child Safe Standard 7: *Processes for complaints and concerns are child-focused.*

- Friday Night School understands that from time to time complaints arise regarding aspects of our operation of programs and activities, and that it is important that all members of the community have the opportunity to be heard.
- Friday Night School has a Complaints Policy.
- Under the Complaints Policy Friday Night School commits to ensuring that anyone raising a complaint will have the right to be listened to by Friday Night School, that anyone having a

complaint made against them will have the right to be told about and respond to that complaint, and that Friday Night School will endeavour to make decisions about complaints fairly and without bias.

Staff knowledge, skills and awareness

Child Safe Standard 8: *Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.*

- All staff and volunteers who are in contact with students, including adult volunteers, parents, teachers and tutors must sign a Code of Conduct which outlines the child-safe practices in place at Friday Night School, and the requirement that they must uphold these practices.
- Staff and volunteers receive training and information to:
 - Implement this policy
 - Recognise indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and young people
 - Respond effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and support those who disclose harm; and
 - Build culturally safe environments for children and young people.
- All adults who are in contact with students are asked to report any child safety concerns to the Friday Night School program director, who is the Child Safety Officer, or to a Friday Night School board member or adult representative.

Safe physical and online environments

Child Safe Standard 9: *Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.*

- Physical and online environments provide oversight by trusted adults at tutoring sessions. Trusted adults are parents, staff, teachers and adult volunteers, ensuring as far as practicable that an adult is not alone with a child
- Posters on the wall at St Ignatius Parish Hall promote child safety and wellbeing
- Only approved online sites and digital tools that support students' learning are used
- The online environment is used in accordance with the Code of Conduct and this policy
- Risks in the online and physical environments are identified and mitigated without compromising a child's privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities
- No cameras are allowed to be used by students, tutors or adult volunteers in either physical or online environments unless specifically authorized by a Board member or the Program Director.

Review of child safe policies and practices

Child Safe Standard 10: *Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.*

- Child Safety requirements are discussed at each *quarterly* Friday Night School Board meeting, and action taken if necessary
- Complaints, concerns and safety incidents are analysed by the Board to identify causes and systemic failures to inform continuous improvement
- Child Safety Standards' policy and processes are reviewed annually or as required with reports on the findings to stakeholders.

Documenting policies and procedures

Child Safe Standard 11: *Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.*

- Friday Night School has documented policies and procedures translated in a range of languages which address the Child Safe Standards
- Staff and volunteers understand and implement policies and procedures

Link to:

- Student Code of Conduct - English, Vietnamese, Arabic and Ukranian
- Parent/Guardian Code of Conduct - English, Vietnamese, Arabic and Ukranian
- Child Safety Code of Conduct - English, Vietnamese, Arabic and Ukranian
- Friday Night School Risk Management Checklist
- Friday Night School Privacy Policy