

St Francis of Assisi, Mill Park

Child Safety Policy

01/01/2017



Date of policy: 1/1/2017
Date of last major review: 21/12/2016
Date of next major review: 1/12/2017

1. Introduction

At St Francis of Assisi Parish, Mill Park, we hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of our parish. Our commitment is drawn from and inherent in the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the Gospel.

The Church's social doctrine constantly points out the need to respect the dignity of children. 'In the family, which is a community of persons, special attention must be devoted to the children by developing a profound esteem for their personal dignity, and a great respect and generous concern for their rights' (Apostolic Exhortation, Familiaris Consortio, 26). Indeed it was Jesus who, when his disciples were arguing among themselves about who was the greatest, directed his attention to a little child and said to his disciples, '*Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me*' (Mark 9.37).

At St Francis of Assisi Parish we will promote in children

- All aspects of our Catholic Faith and how as a faith filled person we respond to all matters in our lives
- To have the right to adhere to Gospel values without prejudice from others.
- An understanding of being safe in our world and the networks that support them in being safe
- The desire to learn and positive attitudes for life-long development.
- A willingness to strive for personal success and realistically high standards in all aspects of their lives
- The development of sense of humility that respects others and one self
- The nurturing of the love of God, others and self
- The ability and disposition to think clearly, broadly, imaginatively, creatively, independently and critically; to make rational decisions and to accept responsibility for their own actions
- The ability and disposition to co-operate and collaborate with others, and an awareness and tolerance of other ways of thinking and behaving
- The development of knowledge skills, attitudes and values which will enable children to participate as active and informed citizens in our democratic society within an international context
- A capacity to exercise and develop judgement in matters of morality, ethics and social justice
- A understanding and respect for their cultural heritage and that of other ethnic groups

2. Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the strong commitment of St Francis of Assisi Parish, Mill Park, to the care, safety and wellbeing of all children in our parish. It provides an outline of the policies, procedures and strategies developed to keep children safe from harm, including all forms of abuse in our parish environment, on site, online and in other locations used by the parish.

This policy applies to all parish personnel, including clergy, parish employees, volunteers and contractors.

3. Principles

The Catholic Church has a moral, legal and mission-driven responsibility to create nurturing environments where children and young people are respected, their voices are heard and they are safe and feel safe.

The following principles underpin our commitment to child safety at St Francis of Assisi Parish, Mill Park:

- Our parish has zero tolerance of child abuse.
- All children are entitled to, as a fundamental right, safety and protection from all forms of abuse and neglect.
- Our parish works in partnership with families and the community to ensure that they are engaged in decision-making processes, particularly those that have an impact on child safety and protection.
- All adults in our parish, including staff, clergy, volunteers, parishioners, contractors, have a responsibility to care for children and young people, to positively promote their wellbeing and to protect them from any kind of harm or abuse.
- The policies, guidelines and codes of conduct for the care, wellbeing and protection of children are based on honest, respectful and trusting relationships between adults and children and young people.
- All persons involved in situations where harm is suspected or disclosed must be treated with sensitivity, dignity and respect.
- Staff, clergy, volunteers, parents, parishioners including children and contractors should be free to raise concerns about child safety, knowing these will be taken seriously by the Parish Priest and his leadership team.
- Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained, with information being provided to those who have a right or a need to be informed, either legally or pastorally.

4. Definitions

Child: A person below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

Child abuse includes:

- (a) any act committed against a child involving:
 - (i) a sexual offence
 - (ii) an offence under section 49B(2) of the **Crimes Act 1958** (grooming)
- (b) the infliction on a child of:
 - (i) physical violence
 - (ii) serious emotional or psychological harm
- (c) Serious neglect of a child.

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.

Child neglect: The failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a child (where they are in a position to do so) with the conditions that are culturally accepted as being essential for their physical and emotional development and wellbeing.

Child physical abuse: Generally, child physical abuse refers to the non-accidental use of physical force against a child that results in harm to the child. Physically abusive behaviours including shoving, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling and poisoning. The fabrication or induction of an illness by a parent or carer (previously known as Munchausen syndrome by proxy) is also included in this definition of “Child physical abuse”.

Child protection: Statutory services designed to protect children who are at risk of serious harm.

Child sexual abuse: Any sexual activity between a child under the age of consent (16) and an adult or older person (i.e. a person two or more years older than the victim) is child sexual abuse.

Child sexual abuse can also be, but not limited to:

- any sexual behaviour between a child and an adult in a position of power or authority over them; the age of consent laws do not apply in such instances due to the strong imbalance of power that exists between young people and authority figures, as well as the breaching of both personal and public trust that occurs when professional boundaries are violated
- any sexual behaviour between a child and an adult family member, regardless of issues of consent, equality or coercion
- sexual activity between peers that is non-consensual or involves the use of power or coercion
- Non-consensual sexual activity between minors (e.g. a 14-year old and an 11-year old), or any sexual behaviour between a child and another child or adolescent who, due to their age or stage of development, is in a position of power, trust or responsibility over the victim. Sexual activity between adolescents at a similar developmental level is not intended to be included in this definition of “Child sexual abuse”.

Mandatory Reporting: The legal requirement to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect is known as mandatory reporting. Mandated persons include teachers, nurses, police, psychologists, psychiatrists and medical practitioners.

Reasonable Belief: When an adult is concerned about the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person, they must assess that concern to determine if a report should be made to the relevant agency. This process of considering all relevant information and observations is known as forming a ‘reasonable belief’. A ‘reasonable belief’ or a ‘belief on reasonable grounds’ is not the same as having proof but is more than mere rumour or speculation. A ‘reasonable belief’ is formed if a reasonable person in the same position would have formed the belief on the same grounds.

5. Policy Commitments

All children at St Francis of Assisi Parish, Mill Park, have the right to be safe and to feel safe. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our first priority and we do not and will not tolerate child abuse. We aim to create a child-safe and child-friendly environment where

children are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety. There is particular attention paid to the most vulnerable children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with a disability.

Our commitment to our children

- (a) We commit to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people in our parish.
- (b) We commit to providing children and young people with positive and nurturing experiences.
- (c) We commit to listening to children and young people and empowering them by taking their views seriously, and addressing any concerns that they raise with us.
- (d) We commit to taking action to ensure that children and young people are protected from abuse or harm.
- (e) We commit to teaching children and young people the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and maintain their personal safety and wellbeing.
- (f) We commit to accepting input and feedback from children regarding the creation of a safe parish environment.

Our commitment to parents and carers

- (a) We commit to communicating honestly and openly with parents and carers about the wellbeing and safety of their children.
- (b) We commit to engaging with, and listening to, the views of parents and carers about our child- safety practices, policies and procedures.
- (c) We commit to transparency in our decision-making with parents and carers where it will not compromise the safety of children or young people.
- (d) We commit to acknowledging the cultural diversity of our parishioners and being sensitive to how this may impact on child safety issues, so that the safety of the child is always of paramount importance.
- (e) We commit to continuously reviewing and improving our systems to protect children from abuse.

Our commitment to our parish employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy (called “staff” for the purposes of this policy):

- (a) We commit to providing all *St Francis of Assisi Parish, Mill Park*, staff with the necessary support to enable them to fulfil their roles. This will include regular and appropriate learning opportunities.
- (b) We commit to providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm policy and procedures in relation to child safety and young people’s protection and wellbeing. This will include annual training in the principles and intent of the Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct, and staff responsibilities to report concerns.

- (c) We commit to listening to all concerns voiced by *St Francis of Assisi Parish, Mill Park*, parishioners and staff about keeping children and young people safe from harm.
- (d) We commit to providing opportunities for *St Francis of Assisi Parish, Mill Park*, 's staff to receive formal debriefing and counselling arising from incidents of the abuse of a child or young person.

6. Responsibilities and Organisation Arrangements

Everyone employed or volunteering at *St Francis of Assisi Parish, Mill Park*, has a responsibility to understand the important and significant role he/she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make ([CAM Commitment Statement to Child Safety](#)).

The parish has allocated roles and responsibilities for child safety as follows:

6.1 Guide to the Responsibilities of Parish Leadership

The parish priest and the *Parish Education Board /Parish Evangelisation Team / parish leadership team* at *St Francis of Assisi Parish, Mill Park*, recognise their particular responsibility to ensure the development of preventative and proactive strategies that promote a culture of openness, awareness of, and shared responsibility for child safety. Responsibilities include:

- creating an environment for children and young people to be safe and to feel safe
- upholding high principles and standards for all clergy and staff
- promoting models of behaviour between adults and children and young people based on mutual respect and consideration
- ensuring thorough and rigorous practices are applied in the recruitment, screening and ongoing professional learning of staff
- ensuring that parish personnel have regular and appropriate learning to develop their knowledge of, openness to and ability to address child safety matters
- providing regular opportunities to clarify and confirm legislative obligations, policy and procedures in relation to child and young people's protection and wellbeing
- ensuring the parish meets the specific requirements of the Victorian Child Safe Standards.

6.2 Guide to Responsibilities of Parish Staff

Responsibilities of parish staff include:

- treating children and young people with dignity and respect, acting with propriety, exercising their duty of care, and protecting children and young people in their care
- following the legislative (including mandatory reporting obligations where appropriate) and Archdiocesan processes if, in the course of their work, they form a reasonable belief that a child or young person has been or is being abused or neglected
- providing a physically and psychologically safe environment where the wellbeing of children and young people is nurtured
- undertaking regular training and education in order to understand their individual responsibilities in relation to child safety and the wellbeing of children and young people

- assisting children and young people to develop positive, responsible and caring attitudes and behaviours which recognise the rights of all people to be safe and free from abuse
- following the Parish's Child Safety Code of Conduct.

6.3 Organisational Arrangements

Review of children's activities within the parish by the Parish Pastoral team at weekly Parish Team meetings.

7. Expectations of our Parish Staff – Child Safety Code of Conduct

At *St Francis of Assisi Parish, Mill Park*, community, we expect parish staff to proactively ensure the safety of children at all times and to take appropriate action if there are concerns about the safety of any child in the parish environment. All staff must remain familiar with the relevant laws, the code of conduct, and policies and procedures in relation to child protection and comply with all requirements. We have developed a Child Safety Code of Conduct, which recognises the critical role that staff play in protecting the children in our care and establishes clear expectations of staff for appropriate behaviour with children in order to safeguard them against abuse and or neglect.

Our Code also protects parish personnel through clarification of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

8. Child Safety and Participation

At *St Francis of Assisi Parish, Mill Park*, , we actively encourage all children to openly express their views and feel comfortable about giving voice to the things that are important to them.

We discuss with our children what they can do if they feel unsafe and enable them to understand, identify, discuss and report on child safety. We listen to and act on any concerns children or their parents or carers, raise with us.

9. Reporting and Responding

Our parish records any child safety complaints, disclosures or breaches of the Child Safety Code of Conduct and stores the records in accordance with security and privacy requirements. Our parish complies with legal obligations that relate to managing the risk of child abuse under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic.), the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.) and the recommendations of the *Betrayal of Trust* report.

Our parish's **Child Protection – Reporting Policy**, updated on 01/01/2017, sets out the actions required under the relevant legislation when there is a reasonable belief that a child in our parish environment is in need of protection or a criminal offence has been committed, and provides guidance and procedures on how to make a report.

We work to ensure all children, families and staff, know what to do and who to tell if they observe abuse or a victim, or if they notice inappropriate behaviour.

Our parish has also established internal processes to ensure that appropriate action is taken to respond to concerns about the wellbeing and/or safety of a child.

Internal Reporting Process

Mandatory Reporting Process	By Whom	To Whom
<p>DHHS Child Protection Mandatory Reporters must make a report as soon as practical if, in the course of practising their profession or carrying out their duties, they for a belief on reasonable grounds that a child or young person is in need of protection, as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse, and the child's parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child</p>	Any Person	Contact DHHS Child Protection & Victoria Police if it is clear a crime has been committed
When a report may be required, though not mandated	By Whom	To Whom
<p>Child in need of protection Any person may make a report if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection for the following reasons: The child has been abandoned and there is no other suitable person willing and able to care for the child. The child's parents are dead or incapacitated and there is no other suitable person who is willing and able to care for the child. ☒ The child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of physical injury and the parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child. ☒ The child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of sexual abuse and their parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child. ☒ The child has suffered or is likely to suffer emotional or psychological harm and the parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child. The child's physical development or health has been, or is likely to be significantly harmed and the parents are unable or unwilling to provide basic care, or effective medical or other remedial care.</p>	Anyone	Contact DHHS Child Protection & Victoria Police if it is clear a crime has been committed
<p>Child in need of therapeutic treatment Any person may make a report if they believe on reasonable grounds that a child who is 10 years of age or over, but under 15 years of age, is in need of therapeutic treatment because he or she has exhibited sexually-abusive behaviours. Contact Child FIRST if there is no significant concern about the immediate safety of the child.</p>	Any person	Contact DHHS Child Protection or Child First Contact Details
<p>Significant concerns about wellbeing of a child School staff can seek advice from or make referral to DHHS Child Protection or Child FIRST if they have a significant concern for the wellbeing of a child and where the immediate safety of the child is not compromised. The staff member should share relevant information with Child FIRST to help them complete their assessment of the referral.</p>	Any person	Contact DHHS Child Protection or Child First Contact Details

Our complaints and disclosure processes are outlined and detailed in the following policies and procedures:

10. Screening and Recruitment of Parish Staff

St Francis of Assisi Parish, Mill Park, will apply thorough and rigorous screening processes in the recruitment of employees and volunteers involved in child-connected work. Our commitment to child safety and our screening requirements are included in all advertisements for such employee, contractor and volunteer positions, and all applicants are provided with copies of the parish Child Safety Code of Conduct and the Child Safety Policy.

When recruiting and selecting employees, contractors and volunteers involved in child-connected work, we make all reasonable efforts to:

- Confirm the applicant's Working with Children Check and National Police Check status and/or professional registration (as relevant)
- Obtain proof of personal identity and any professional or other qualifications
- Verify the applicant's history of work involving children
- Obtain references that address the applicant's suitability for the job and working with children.

We have processes for monitoring and assessing the continuing suitability of parish staff to work with children, including regular reviews of the status of Working with Children Checks.

11. Child Safety – Education and Training for Parish Staff

St Francis of Assisi Parish, Mill Park, provides clergy, employees and volunteers with regular and appropriate opportunities to develop their knowledge of, openness to and ability to address child safety matters. This includes induction, ongoing training and professional learning to ensure that everyone understands their professional and legal obligations and responsibilities, and the procedures for reporting suspicion of child abuse and neglect.

All employees agree to employment with the requirements set by the HR department of the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

Pursuant to the Victorian Child Safe Standards, Child Safe Standard 4,

Our parish/organisation is required to have screening, supervision, training and other human resource practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel.

	CAM and parish employees and parish volunteers where their role comes into contact with children
Recruitment	
Advertisements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to make reference to CAM's/Parish's commitment to child safety • Any written communication should include a statement as follows: 'This parish/CAM promotes the safety, wellbeing and inclusion of all children including those from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, children with a disability and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.' • Specifically welcome applications from Aboriginal people, people from culturally/linguistically diverse backgrounds and those with a disability • Could include: 'this organisation promotes the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal children, and encourages applications from Aboriginal peoples.' • Needs to inform applicants that appropriate rigorous reference and background checking will be undertaken, including a Working with Children Check and where relevant police record check • advise that all successful applicants are required to sign and work within our Child Safety Code of Conduct
Job description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be clear about the role and responsibilities of the position • set out the role's essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety • Should specify the requirement for the applicant to have an understanding of and commitment to, child safety and the wellbeing of children • should state the employer's expectation that staff provide a child-safe environment • should clearly specify reporting line
Selection criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where relevant- Must have experience working with children • Must demonstrate an understanding of child safety • Where relevant- Must be able to demonstrate an understanding of appropriate behaviours when engaging with children • Where relevant- familiarity with legal obligations relating to child safety (e.g. mandatory reporting, grooming, failure to report and protect) • Where relevant- demonstration of the needs of children with a disability • awareness of Aboriginal cultural issues • Awareness of the different needs for safety of culturally and linguistically diverse children

Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure interview questions are asked which aim to uncover the applicant's understanding of child safety • Where appropriate to the role, questions might include:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why do you want to work with children ○ Describe a time you worked with a child you found difficult and how you dealt with it ○ Describe a time you had to comfort a distressed child ○ Outline your understanding of professional boundaries with children ○ What do you think of our Statement of Commitment and our Code of Conduct? • Emphasise the culture of valuing child safety and the expectations of staff responsibilities • Depending on the location/make-up of the congregation of the parish, it may be relevant to ask specific questions regarding promoting the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children with a disability • Sight proof of identity, qualifications, registration and Working with Children Check (as relevant) • Confirm referee details and the relationship of the applicant to them • discuss contacting previous employers- where relevant to the position, address any gaps in employment history that involve work with children • advise the applicant what will happen to the information that's provided and who will have access to it
Reference checking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct at least two referee checks for the applicant, including most recent employer, and compile and keep a written record of each check • Establish and verify the referee's identity and relationship with the applicant • Verify applicant's work history and experience • Where relevant to the role, verify applicant's history of work with children and ask questions relating to child safety • Questions might include:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Are you aware whether the applicant has previously worked with children in an employment or volunteer setting ○ Have you directly observed the applicant working directly with children ○ Did you have any reason to be concerned about the applicant's behaviour with children ○ Is the referee comfortable knowing the applicant may sometimes be working alone with children ○ Would you feel comfortable allowing the person to be alone with your child ○ Do you have any concerns about the applicant's

	<p>attitude towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds or people with a disability?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If relevant, confirm applicant’s professional registration on registering body’s website • employer retains document for at least seven years and complies with privacy legislation and policies in relation to the storage and use of personal records
Offer of Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter of offer should attach the parish/CAM Statement of Commitment, the parish/CAM Child Safety Policy and the Child Safety Code of Conduct • Letter of acceptance of the offer of employment, where relevant, should include words such as “I understand and accept that my appointment to this position requires compliance with the parish’s/CAM’s Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct. I have read and understood both these documents.”

Training

Induction process

- Should inform new staff and volunteers about child safety policies and processes and the Code of Conduct
- Provide parish/CAM child-safe policy and code of conduct
- Provide parish/CAM Commitment to Child Safety
- provide copy of the responsibilities of the employee/volunteer
- provide information about communication lines within the parish/CAM
- Ensure pre-engagement checks have been sighted (where applicable, e.g. Drivers licence, Working with Children Check, National Police Certificate)
- Inform/email relevant staff about the new volunteer's/employee's arrival and role
- Discuss volunteer's/employee's responsibilities
- Discuss with the new volunteer/employee the parish's/CAM's child safety policy and code of conduct. Ensure they are provided with training on legislative obligations of reporting, and support in identifying, assessing and reducing or removing child abuse risks where relevant
- Provide new volunteer/employee with reasonable timeframe to read documents and provide the contact details of key personnel in case they have any questions regarding the parish's/CAM's child safety policy and code of conduct
- Volunteers/employees should be advised that they should:-
 - Not work alone with children
 - If unavoidable, be careful to remain visible when working alone with children
 - Not have unnecessary physical contact with children
 - Avoid having 'favourites' among children
 - Be given an opportunity to ask questions about relevant policies, procedures and practise
 - Know who to contact if they have concerns

Regularly provide information and training on a needs basis

- Can be:-
 - Training by external organisations
 - Developed and delivered internally
 - On-line programmes e.g. PROTECT website
 - On the job training, mentoring and coaching
- Records of training received should be kept
- Training required in appropriate standards of care and duty of care owed to children
- What child abuse is
- How to identify and reduce child abuse risks
- Understanding and appreciating Aboriginal culture and other cultures and languages they may engage with in their role
- understanding what constitutes appropriate behaviour

	<p>between children and in relation to adults with children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Detecting signs of abuse and how to identify inappropriate behaviours in other adults• The organisation's policies and procedures including the Statement of Commitment, Code of Conduct and Child Safe Policy- where to access them and understanding them• Child safety protocols including how to respond and reporting guidelines• Legislative requirements re reporting abuse, removing known risks and when WWCC is required• Legislative requirements re grooming, failure to protect and failure to report• Cultural awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, culturally and linguistically diverse children and children with a disability• Ensuring safe environments for children with a disability and understanding how to engage safely with them
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Supervision	
ensure new staff are closely supervised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check behaviour toward children is appropriate
Discuss progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss their experience to date with settling into their role and whether the role has met their expectations • Discuss whether there have been any issues or concerns
Probationary periods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should monitor and assess a job occupant's continuing suitability for child connected work • Should implement practices that enable the employer to be satisfied that people engaged in child connected work perform appropriately in relation to child safety • Can vary but usually between 3 and 6 months • Regularly 'touch base' with the new employee/volunteer to keep the communication flowing and address any concerns as they arise

Safeguarding Children and Young People

Code of Conduct

St Francis of Assisi Parish, Mill Park,

01/01/2017

Central to the mission of St Francis of Assisi Parish, Mill Park, is an unequivocal commitment 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 spiritually, physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially.

Purpose

This Code of Conduct has a specific focus on safeguarding children and young people at *St Francis of Assisi Parish, Mill Park*, against sexual, physical, psychological and emotional abuse or neglect. It is intended to complement child protection legislation and the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne's "Code of Conduct for Caring for Children, *May our children flourish*".

All staff, volunteers, contractors, clergy and parish council members at *St Francis of Assisi Parish, Mill Park*, are expected to actively contribute to a parish culture that respects the dignity of its members and affirms the Gospel values of love, care for others, compassion and justice. They are required to observe child-safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children, as noted below.

Acceptable behaviours

All staff, volunteers, contractors, clergy and parish council members are responsible for supporting the safety of children by:

- adhering to the parish Child Safe Policy and upholding the parish's Statement of Commitment to child safety at all times
- taking all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse and harm
- treating everyone in the parish community with respect (modelling positive and respectful relationships and acting in a manner that sustains a safe pastoral environment)
- listening and responding to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child have been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (for example, by never questioning an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child's self-identification)
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (for example, by having a zero tolerance policy towards discrimination)
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of children with a disability (for example, by ensuring reasonable care is taken to cater for any additional needs being faced)
- ensuring as far as practicable that an adult is not alone with a child
- reporting any allegations of child abuse to the police
- understanding and complying with all reporting obligations as they relate to mandatory reporting and reporting under the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.)
- reporting any child safety concerns to the parish priest or the Vicar General if the concern relates to the parish priest (or child safety officer if the parish has appointed someone to this role)
- if an allegation of child abuse is made, ensuring as quickly as possible that the child(ren) are safe.

Unacceptable behaviours

Staff, volunteers, contractors, clergy and parish council members must not:

- ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed child abuse
- develop any 'special' relationships with children that could be seen as favouritism (for example, the offering of gifts or special treatment for specific children)
- exhibit behaviours with children which may be construed as unnecessarily physical (for example, inappropriate sitting on laps)
- put children at risk of abuse (for example, by locking doors or being alone with a child with no good cause)
- initiate unnecessary physical contact with children or do things of a personal nature that a child can do for themselves, such as toileting or changing clothes
- manage disruptive or unsafe behaviour by degrading or isolating a child; corporal punishment is never acceptable. Physical restraint should only be used as a last resort or in an emergency
- engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature in the presence of children (for example, personal details or social activities)
- use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- express personal views on cultures, race or sexuality in the presence of children
- discriminate against any child because of age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality, ethnicity or disability

- have contact with a child or their family who is/are not socially related outside of the pastoral duties reasonably associated with the role description of the person's position in the parish without the parish priest's or child safety officer's (if the parish has appointed someone to this role) knowledge and/or consent (other than accidental contact, such as seeing people in the street)
- have any online contact (including by social media, email, instant messaging etc.) with a child or their family who is/are not family or socially related (unless necessary e.g. by providing families with e-newsletters)
- use any personal communication channels/device such as a personal email account to conduct parish communications
- exchange personal contact details such as phone number, social networking sites or email addresses with a child or their family who is/are not family or socially related
- photograph or video a child without the consent of the parent or guardians
- work with children while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- consume drugs on parish premises or at parish events.

12. Risk Management

At St Francis of Assisi Parish, Mill Park, we are committed to proactively and systematically identifying and assessing risks to child safety across our whole parish environment (physical and online), and reducing or eliminating (where possible) all potential sources of harm. We document, implement, monitor and periodically review our risk management strategies for child safety and ensure that the strategies change as needed and as new risks arise.

Risk Management Checklist for St Francis of Assisi Mill Park

Pursuant to the Victorian Child Safe Standards,
our parish is required to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate risk management strategies to ensure the safety of our children.

Parish Activity/Ministry/Space	Potential risk identified	Action required after considering likelihood of risk eventuating, consequences of the risk eventuating and anticipated cost of preventative measures	Urgency given potential for harm and likelihood of risk eventuating- specify date by when rectification is needed	Person responsible	Date action needed is completed	Reviewed by Parish Council
Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical obstructions - carpet edges, sharp corners of furniture • When Church not in public use - visibility, access for vulnerable people and children 					
Sacristy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visibility • Public access while children preparing for altar serving? • Dark, unwelcoming space? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure supervision by adult with current WWCC while children are preparing before Mass • restrict access to the sacristy • ensure adequate lighting 				
Altar Servers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training sessions • changing in the sacristy • children unattended in the sacristy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure supervision by an adult with a current WWCC 				

Children's Liturgy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical appropriateness of the space • location to the church • emergency situation during session • lack of appropriate supervision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review the space annually • leaders to accompany children • update emergency contact details • mobile phone and emergency contact information easily accessible • ensure leader plus 1 in calling range at all times 				
Parish Activity/Ministry/Space	Potential risk identified	Action required after considering likelihood of risk eventuating, consequences of the risk eventuating and anticipated cost of preventative measures	Urgency given potential for harm and likelihood of risk eventuating- specify date by when rectification is needed	Person responsible	Date action needed is completed	Reviewed by Parish Council
Parish fundraising events	•	•				
New Parents' group	•	•				
Communion Visitation • To private homes • To nursing homes	• Safety of children in the home visited	• WWCC required				
Parish/school hall use e.g. • Funeral celebrations • Elderly citizens' club • •	• Potential access to school premises that cannot be restricted if also an emergency exit	•				
Church cleaning, flower arranging, altar preparation	• Unanticipated access by unaccompanied children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure volunteers work in teams unless WWCC is held by the volunteer • Ensure workers sign in and out with parish staff. Staff to check up if 				

		unusual delay and generally supervise				
Dropping off meals to families in need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety of children in the home visited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boundaries clearly defined and explained • Current WWCC • visit in pairs • Do not enter premises if child/ren are home without adult supervision 				
Parish Activity/Ministry/Space	Potential risk identified	Action required after considering likelihood of risk eventuating, consequences of the risk eventuating and anticipated cost of preventative measures	Urgency given potential for harm and likelihood of risk eventuating- specify date by when rectification is needed	Person responsible	Date action needed is completed	Reviewed by Parish Council
Parish events held externally e.g. parish picnics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitability of workers • Suitability of venue chosen • Food hygiene • Emergency situations e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Food allergies • Sun protection • Taking and public posting of images of children without consent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WWC required • screening of all volunteers • Previous discussion of behaviour expected of volunteers and participants • conduct risk assessment • Ratio of participant: supervisor • Parental consents obtained • Emergency contingencies previously discussed • Clear advice on parish's expectations • Permission from parents of photography expected • Clear message to children and leaders that photography only in groups, no 				

		posting without parents' permission • Message delivered in a manner to take account of diversity of children • Clear policy on drugs and alcohol				
Specific groups with special needs • Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islanders • Culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds • People with a disability	• • • Sight impairment • Hearing impairment • mobility	• Consultation where possible • Translator if necessary • lighting; larger print when required • hearing loop in church • ramps for easy access; adequate bathroom facilities? • Convenient space in church when crowded for easy access to altar- Distribution of communion to be taken to the person? Child's preference to be considered				
Online environment	•	•				

N.B. The above table is intended as a guide only; it is certainly not to be used as an exhaustive list of possible risks in the parish environment. Other types of issues to be considered include:

- Familiarity breeding a culture of not reporting issues
- Natural trust of long-term parish workers
- Unsupervised recreational or other activities on parish premises
- Ad-hoc contractors on the premises
- Vulnerability of staff and children due to unknown personal issues
- Unknown people on parish premises out of supervised times e.g. Mass times and immediately before or afterwards

13. Relevant Legislation

- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic.) – Three new criminal offences have been introduced under this Act.
- (a) **Failure to disclose offence**: Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 16 has an obligation to report that information to police. Failure to disclose the information to police is a criminal offence.
- (b) **Failure to protect offence**: The offence will apply where there is a substantial risk that a child under the age of 16 under the care, supervision or authority of a relevant organisation will become a victim of a sexual offence committed by an adult associated with that organisation. A person in a position of authority in the organisation will commit the offence if they know of the risk, but negligently fail to reduce or remove it.
- (c) **Grooming offence**: This offence targets predatory conduct designed to facilitate later sexual activity with a child. Grooming can be conducted in person or online, for example via interaction through social media, web forums and emails.

14. Related Policies

14.1 Catholic Archdiocese Melbourne Policies

- Working with Children Check Protocols
- National Police Record Check Policy
- Code of Conduct for Caring for Children “May our children flourish”
- Social medial policy

14.2 Parish Policies

Please refer back to section 9 - Reporting and Responding

15. Breach of Policy

Where an **employee** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this Policy, this may result in disciplinary consequences.

Where the **Parish Priest** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the concerned party is advised to contact the Vicar General. If there is any reasonable belief that a criminal act has been committed, the concerned party is advised to contact Victoria Police.

Where any **other member of the parish community** is suspected of breaching any obligation, duty or responsibility within this policy, the parish priest is to take appropriate action (*Please refer back to section: 9 - Reporting and Responding. and / or contact Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne (Office of Professional Conduct and Ethics).*)

16. Review of this Child Safety Policy

At St Francis of Assisi Parish, Mill Park, we are committed to continuous improvement of our child safety systems and practices. We intend this policy to be a dynamic document that will

be regularly reviewed to ensure it is working in practice and updated to accommodate changes in legislation or circumstance.

We will maintain a history of updates to the policy.

History of Updates to Policy

Date	Comment (e.g. major review, minor review)

17. Inclusion of All

We will ensure that families and children have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and people with a disability.

18. References

Catholic Education Melbourne Child Safety Policy Editable Template – June 2016

Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, *Commitment Statement to Child Safety* – September 2016

State of Victoria 2016, *Child Safe Standards* – *Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools: Ministerial Order. 870*, Education & Training Reform Act 2006, Victorian Government Gazette No. S2

Victorian Government Department of Justice 2016, *Betrayal of Trust Implementation.*