Southlakes Parish Safety Policy

The Southlakes Anglican Church is committed to providing a safe, welcoming, inclusive and respectful environment in which children, young people, the elderly and vulnerable can participate fully in the life of the church. We recognise that every person is created in the image of God and has inherent dignity and worth. We therefore seek to ensure that everyone who comes into contact with our Church is treated with respect, compassion and care.

The safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable people is a responsibility shared by our entire church community.

Southlakes Anglican Church follows the Newcastle Anglican Diocese Parish Safety policy and this policy should be read in conjunction with it.

1. Purpose

Southlakes Anglican Church Safety Policy aims to:

- prevent abuse, neglect, exploitation and harm
- promote the physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual wellbeing of all
- ensure people feel welcomed, valued and heard
- respond to concerns quickly and appropriately
- meet all NSW legal and diocesan requirements
- recruit, train and supervise people safely

2. Scope

Our Parish Safety Policy applies to:

- all our church workers, including volunteers
- contractors, consultants and others engaged to provide services
- church members and those who access our site and/or programs.
- guests or hirers of our facilities

The policy applies during all services and functions conducted onsite and any church activity conducted away from church premises.

3. A Welcoming and Inclusive Church

Safety and welcome go hand-in-hand. We want people to experience church as a place where they belong.

We will:

- greet families, children, elderly people and vulnerable adults warmly
- make worship and activities accessible
- provide age-appropriate and ability-appropriate programs
- make reasonable adjustments for disability

- respect cultural and linguistic diversity
- avoid discrimination and exclusion
- provide clear information about activities
- listen to feedback from children, families and vulnerable people

Safeguarding should never isolate or stigmatise anyone.

4. Listening to Children and Vulnerable People

Children, elderly people and vulnerable adults will be encouraged to:

- express their views
- raise concerns
- ask questions
- give feedback
- participate in decisions affecting them

Children will be told, in age-appropriate language:

- what safe behaviour looks like
- who they can talk to
- how to raise a concern
- that they will be taken seriously
- that speaking up is never their fault

5. Responsibilities

A. All people at church will:

i. Be respectful of all people, especially of children and the vulnerable (i.e. respect each other's rights to safe and friendly interactions at church)
ii. Take all reasonable care for their own health and safety
iii. Take reasonable care that their actions do not adversely affect others' health and safety
iv. report any concerns, incidents, or accidents to their team leader, the Parish Safety Officer, or the wardens as soon as possible
v. comply with all reasonable instructions from the Church leadership.

B. Parish Leadership

The Rector, wardens and Parish Council will:

- model safe behaviour
- ensure this policy is implemented and followed
- provide resources for safety
- oversee screening and training
- ensure complaints are managed properly
- follow legal and diocesan reporting requirements
- Rector is responsible for ensuring that parish clergy and church workers are advised, at least annually about this policy.
- will outlined policy to all new staff as part of the child safe training.
- review safeguarding regularly

C. Parish Safety Officer

The Church will appoint Parish Safety Officers to oversee:

1. OH&S, in conjunction with Church Wardens, to:

- Review maintenance of buildings
- Identify threats such as fire hazards, severe weather, medical emergencies
- Ensure contractors are suitably trained and licenced
- help people understand reporting pathways
- assist with risk management
- escalate concerns appropriately

2. Volunteers

We will take reasonable steps to ensure people working with children, elderly people and vulnerable adults are suitable.

Recruitment will be in accordance with the Newcastle Anglican Diocese requirements and may include:

- position descriptions
- interviews
- reference checks
- identity checks
- Working with Children Checks (where required)
- diocesan screening
- induction

Training will be conducted according to Newcastle Anglican Diocesan requirements and will cover:

- child safety
- recognising abuse
- responding to disclosures
- mandatory reporting
- boundaries and supervision
- online safety
- disability awareness
- supporting elderly and vulnerable adults
- complaint handling

Refresher training will occur regularly.

3. Code of Conduct

All clergy, staff and volunteers must:

- treat people with dignity and respect
- use appropriate language
- maintain physical and emotional boundaries
- avoid favouritism
- avoid unnecessary physical contact
- respect privacy
- use appropriate communication channels

- ensure interactions are observable and interruptible

Children and vulnerable people must never be pressured to hug, kiss or touch anyone.

Where physical assistance is required (e.g., disability, frailty), dignity and privacy will be respected.

4. Safe Ministry Practices

i. One-to-One Ministry

Where possible, one-to-one interactions with children or vulnerable adults should:

- occur in observable or open environments
- be known to another responsible adult
- avoid unnecessary isolation
- follow diocesan guidelines
- be documented when appropriate

ii. Transport

When the church arranges transport:

- consent must be obtained
- drivers must meet legal and church requirements
- vehicles must be safe and insured
- seatbelt laws must be followed
- one-to-one transport should be avoided where possible

iii. Online Communication

Online communication with children must:

- use approved channels
- be transparent
- avoid secret or disappearing messages
- respect privacy
- follow church social media guidelines

5. Complaints and Concerns

Anyone may raise a concern about:

- abuse
- inappropriate conduct
- bullying or harassment
- discrimination
- unsafe practices
- breaches of the Code of Conduct

We will:

- listen respectfully
- take concerns seriously

- respond promptly
- avoid retaliation
- provide support
- maintain confidentiality appropriately
- document concerns
- report when required

Children will have child-friendly ways to make complaints.

6. Supporting People Who Speak Up

We will ensure that people who raise concerns:

- are listened to
- are treated respectfully
- are not blamed
- are not required to confront an alleged perpetrator
- receive appropriate support

Our response will be compassionate and trauma-informed.

7. Inclusion and Cultural Safety

We will:

- respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- respect cultural and linguistic diversity
- make communication accessible
- provide reasonable adjustments for disability
- ensure safeguarding practices consider cultural needs

8. Policy Approval and Review

1. Our Southlakes Parish Safety Policy and related procedures and practices were approved by Southlakes Anglican Parish Council on 15 October 2026.
2. This policy will be reviewed, as a minimum, annually and as necessary to remain compliant with new legislation