St Nicholas - Safe Use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments Procedure

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) St Nicholas is committed to providing a child environment, acknowledging both the physical and online environment. Digital technology will be utilised by St Nicholas team members, children and families in a manner which protects children from harm, and provides a child safe environment, while enabling learning opportunities, documentation of children's learning and communication between the home and service.

(2) St Nicholas recognises the increasing presence of digital technology in the lives of children, St Nicholas educators and families, and is committed to ensure the appropriate engagement with technology to enhance the educational program, record children's education and care, and communicate with families.

(3) The use of digital technology can enhance the educational program, providing children with opportunities to be creative and active within their learning, while learning about and exploring technology. The Early Years Learning Framework and My Time Our Place curriculum frameworks state that children and young people are to use digital technologies and media to access information, investigate and express ideas, and represent their thinking (2022). Supporting the integration of technologies within the curriculum to develop children's skills, knowledge and understanding of how they are used will equip children to engage safely and appropriately.

(4) In addition to using technology with children, St Nicholas team members will utilise technology to document children's education and care. Capturing learning with technology provides the ability for children, families and St Nicholas team members to revisit learning experiences. In the early years, recording children's routine times provides families with ready access to aspects of their child's day, which will strengthen the continuity of care between the home and service.

(5) In early childhood settings, the use of personal devices for employees and children is guided by the National Model Code for Early Childhood Education and Care and Taking Images or Videos of Children While Providing Early Childhood Education and Care Guidelines with strict controls around the use of any personal devices in the environment, as well as the taking use, storage and destruction of images and videos of children.

(6) This procedure recognises there are continuing advances in the use of technology including software, applications, information sharing and devices and therefore St Nicholas team members must seek advice and clarification from the St Nicholas Nominated Supervisor and St Nicholas Assistant Head of Early Education when engaging with new or unfamiliar technology.

(7) The Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 require approved providers to ensure their services have policies and procedures in place in relation to providing a child safe environment. This procedure needs to read in conjunction with the St Nicholas Compliance Policy and the St Nicholas – Child Safe Environment Procedure.

Section 2 - Scope

(8) This procedure applies to all St Nicholas employees who educate and care for children in Early Education and

OOSH services, the children who attend St Nicholas services, their parent/carers, Diocesan workers and visitors to the services.

Section 3 - Responsibilities

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES
St Nicholas Approved Provider	• Ensure that the obligations under the Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010 and Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 are met. • Take reasonable steps to ensure that the St Nicholas Nominated Supervisor, St Nicholas employees and visitors follow the Safe Use of Digitial Technologies and Online Environments Procedure. • Promote a culture of child safety and wellbeing that underpins all aspects of service operations, to reduce risk to children (including the risks of online abuse). • Ensure St Nicholas Nominated Supervisors and St Nicholas employees implement practices aligned with the National Model Code for Early Childhood Education and Care and Taking Images or Videos of Children While Providing Early Childhood Education and Care Guidelines, NSW Child Safe Standards and the services child safe practices for the use of electronic and digital devices for taking images or videos of children. • Provide secure digital technologies devices for the use and storage of images and videos of children • Ensure copies of this procedure are readily accessible to St Nicholas employees. • Provide services with appropriate information for the storage, use, retention and destruction of photos and videos, including the Information and Records Management Policy, Procedure and associated guidelines.
St Nicholas Nominated Supervisor/ St Nicholas Responsible Person	• Ensure the service is adhering to the St Nicholas Safe Use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments Procedure and National Model Code for Early Childhood Education and Care and Taking Images or Videos of Children While Providing Early Childhood Education and Care Guidelines. • Understand only service issued devices are to be used to take, use and store images and videos of children being educated and cared for by the service. • Ensure reasonable precautions are taken to protect children from harm and hazard when using technologies and engaging in online environments. • Maintain working order of any issued digital technologies at the service. • Ensure service devices only have applications deployed by Technology Services. • Maintain currency in complying with any relevant changes in legislation and practices in relation to this procedure. • Lodge a Service@MN ticket as soon as practically possible if technology is broken or needs repair. • Report any misuse of technology in mnResponse and to any relevant agencies or authorities. • Ensure any child disclosure of unwanted contact online is reported in mnResponse and to any relevant agencies or authorities. • Ensure accurate records are maintained of parent/care authority to take, use and store images and videos of children. • Ensure children whose parent/carers do not give written authority will be excluded from having their photograph shared. • Ensure children who are not to be photographed or videoed remain participating in all aspects of the educational program. • Ensure St Nicholas and Diocesan employees, volunteers and students seek written permission from families/carers if they are requested to take photographs or videos for purposes such as educational studies. • Ensure St Nicholas team members are aware of risks to children when including use of technology and the internet in learning. • Ensure there is active and adequate supervision of children when St Nicholas team members are using digital technologies. • Advocate the importance of a child safe online environment. • Maintain currency in understanding of digital citizenship and promote responsible and ethical online use for children and St Nicholas team members. • Engage St Nicholas team members in training on the safe use of digital technologies and online environments. • Ensure any subcontractors visiting the site do not use any form of digital technology to capture images of children. • Limit the deployment of applications for use to the approved list. • Communicate with families (except for face-to-face) using the service phone or St Nicholas email address.

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES
St Nicholas Team Members	• Make thoughtful pedagogical decisions around the use of technology within the educational program and teach children how to use technology safely. • Reflect upon the use of technology within the educational program. • Implement the services culture of child safety and wellbeing, including when accessing digital technologies and online environments. • Ensure reasonable precautions are taken to protect children harm and hazard when using technologies and engaging in online environments. • Ensure any applications used with children have been deployed by Technology Services. • Be aware and minimise risks to children when including use of technology and the internet in the program • Ensure understand and align individual practices with the National Model Code for Early Childhood Education and Care , Taking Images or Videos of Children While Providing Early Childhood Education and Care Guidelines and the service's expectations around the use of personal and service issued devices, and seek guidance when needed from the St Nicholas Nominated Supervisor or Approved Supervisor. • Understand only service issued devices are to be used to take, use and store images and videos of children being educated and cared for by the service. • Ensure children whose parent/carers do not give written authority will be excluded from having their photograph taken. • Maintain full participation in the educational program for children who are not permitted to be photographed or videoed. • Ensure written permission is sought from parents/carers if they are requested to take photographs or videos for purposes such as their studies. • Maintain appropriate, active supervision of children when using digital technologies, including by monitoring and maintaining staff to child ratios. • Ensure children participate in decision making in matters affecting them regarding the safe use of digital technologies and online environments at the service. • Understand the individual needs and action plans for the children in your care and understand how they relate to the safe use of digital technologies and online environments. • Report the misuse of digital devices or technology and unacceptable online behaviours to the St Nicholas Nominated Supervisor/St Nicholas Responsible Person. • Report any disclosures of unwanted contact whether known or unknown to the child. • Utilise digital technology in the educational program as a tool to support the learning and development of each child. • Advocate the importance of a child safe online environment. • Maintain currency in understanding of digital citizenship and promote responsible and ethical online use for children and St Nicholas team members. • Communicate with families (except for face-to-face) using the service phone or St Nicholas email address.
Parent/Carers	• Indicate consent regarding the authority granted to St Nicholas and Diocesan employees to photograph or video child upon enrolment. • Update St Nicholas Nominated Supervisor of any changes to photograph/video consent for their child, in writing. • Connect to the relevant application to obtain visibility over documentation of children's routines and learning. • Engage with the relevant application to sign children in and out of the service. • Maintain responsibility for any digital devices or technology provided to children from home in services (OOSH only). • Refrain from taking photographs or video of children other than your own, unless consent has been received. • Support children to develop their digital citizenship to understand how to use technology effectively, ethically and safely. • Communicate with St Nicholas team members (except for face-to-face) using the service phone or St Nicholas email address.
Children	• Personal use of digital technology is not permitted in the early education setting. • School age children are required to use any personal device in a safe, responsible and respectful manner, provided this is supported by a St Nicholas team member. • Seek support from St Nicholas team members when using digital technologies. • Engage with the service-issued devices with respect.

Section 4 - Procedure/Process

Using CCMS for Educators

(9) For services who are utilising CCMS software:

a. St Nicholas team members follow the guidance from St Nicholas Support Office regarding the use of functionality within the CCMS platform.
b. St Nicholas team members will record information about children's routines including sleep and rest times, mealtimes, nappy changes and/or toileting needs, sunscreen application and health information in the early education setting, as soon as practically possible.
c. In the event that software is not accessible, records need to be maintained manually.
d. Parent/carers must sign their child in and out using the relevant application for OOSH settings, and iPad for early education settings.

Children's Use of Digital Technologies in the Educational Program

(10) All St Nicholas educators are to intentionally plan for the use of digital technologies to enhance the educational program, referencing the Early Years Learning Framework and My Time, Our Place frameworks.

(11) Children are expected to engage creatively, actively, purposely with digital technologies, whilst maintaining care and respect for devices.

(12) In Early Education settings, St Nicholas educators are to ensure the use of technology aligns with the National Model Code for Early Chldhood Education and Care and Taking Images or Videos of Children While Providing Early Childhood Education and Care Guidelines.

(13) St Nicholas educators are to ensure the use of technology aligns with the Statement on Young Children and Digital Technologies (ECA, 2018).

(14) Viewing of programs must be carefully selected and suitable to the needs and development levels of each child and utilised to assist in expanding the content of the daily program with current affairs.

a. Popular culture programs are only to be included to extend on the educational program.
b. Programs depicting violence eg. graphic news reports should not be shown.
c. Children in Early Education are to view 'G' rated programs only. Children in OOSH services can view 'PG' rated programs, with parental permission.

(15) All content will be socially and culturally considerate and appropriate.

(16) St Nicholas team members are required to be actively supervising technology use and ensure they are positioned where they can see view screens.

Use of personal digital devices for children

Early Education

(17) Children are not permitted to bring personal digital devices or technology to the service.

OOSH

(18) Parents/carers are required to sign a technology agreement, stating personal devices are only used for homework

or games. Children will be able to use personal devices once the agreement has been signed.

(19) Children are not permitted to use their personal digital devices or technology to record, photograph, video or make a call during the operational hours of the service.

(20) Children are able to use their personal laptops for research, to complete schoolwork and/or to play games for a maximum of 30 minutes per session.

(21) Personal devices are to be stored in the office space or locker when not in use.

Use of personal digital devices for employees

(22) St Nicholas employees must:

a. adopt the National Model Code for Early Childhood Education and Care and Taking Images or Videos of Children While Providing Early Childhood Education and Care Guidelines.
b. not be in possession of personal electronic devices that can take images or videos, and/or personal storage and file transfer media while working with children, unless for authorised essential purposes such as emergencies, health and family needs.
c. not use their personal digital devices or technology to record, photograph or video children at the service.
d. store their personal phone in their locker or a secure place while working directly with children.
e. not use smart watches to take photo/videos, make receive phone calls or to send/receive messages when responsible for supervising children. Any wearable technology that is deemed by the St Nicholas Nominated Supervisor as a regular distraction to the supervision and care of children, will be performance managed, if required.
f. not communicate with parent/carers through personal devices or via personal social media accounts in relation to matters regarding children's care and education, unless in an emergency.
g. not use earbuds when working directly with children.

Photographing and videoing children

(23) St Nicholas employees should ask children for consent to take and share their photographs and video.

(24) St Nicholas employees should photograph and video children purposefully, focusing on capturing moments that highlight learning and development.

(25) St Nicholas employees are encouraged to focus the camera angle on the learning that is taking place, which may just focus on parts of their body, such as their hands.

(26) Photography and videos of children's learning should be utilised to share a pedagogical stories by capturing children's learning and identify progress in their skills and development.

Acceptable use of technology

Children

(27) The unacceptable use of technology and the internet will not be tolerated by St Nicholas. If children engage in inappropriate use of technology, the device will be removed from the child and placed in a secure location to be collected by the parent/carer upon collection of the child. This includes the videoing/photographing of other children without their consent, on all forms of technology including smart watches. If children actively engage in serious misconduct with digital technology devices or technology including cyberbullying, accessing harmful content, accessing illegal content, sexting or online hate behaviour, St Nicholas may cease enrolment.

St Nicholas Employees

(28) St Nicholas employees are required to adhere to the St Nicholas – Safe Use of Technologies and Online Environments Procedure, ensuring the responsible and ethical use of technology with respect to the safety and privacy of children and St Nicholas team members.

Recommended Screen Use and Time for Children

(29) Greater focus has been placed on the quantity of screen time for children, however further attention needs to be placed on the quality of engagement with digital technologies. Screen time has become synonymous with sedentary activity, however quality interaction with digital technology can promote learning, digital literacy, social interactions and physical activity.

(30) Educator practices are required to support children's meaningful engagement with technology and facilitate the safe and responsible use of technology within the service. When educators program for technology intentionally to promote creativity, social interactions, movements and connection, technology.

CCTV

(31) Currently, St Nicholas Early Education and OOSH services do not utilise CCTV. In future, this may be adopted as an additional measure to support the safety of children, and will be planned and implemented in consultation with St Nicholas employees and families. A specific St Nicholas – CCTV Procedure will be implemented in the event of the introduction of CCTV into services.

Use of Artificial Intelligence for Programming and Planning

(32) St Nicholas services are permitted to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) only with approval from the Head of Early Education or Head of OOSH.

(33) Use of AI technologies will supplement, not replace, human intuition, engagement, and creativity.

(34) AI will be used to enhance educational experiences for children, promote their individual learning, development and well-being, and to assist St Nicholas educators in observational recording without compromising the privacy, inclusivity, and safety of children.

(35) AI applications will only be used by qualified staff who have received training on privacy, data use, and ethical use of technology in ECEC contexts.

(36) Any use of AI programs or applications will undergo rigorous testing process to validate their accuracy and reliability in the ECEC context.

(37) Data usage from the AI application will be used only for educational purposes and only when consent is obtained from parents/carers on collection in accordance, treated as a personal and sensitive document under the Australian Privacy Principles and the Privacy Policy.

(38) Any information collected through AI technology will be stored on secure platforms and will not be disclosed to any outside third-party without proper prior approval.

(39) Ethical concerns regarding access to data, discrimination, and child privacy will be thoroughly addressed in accordance with the Framework.

(40) St Nicholas will communicate and explain the AI application facilities to families and engage educators in professional development and training to ensure AI use is effectively monitored and applied in line with the aims and goals of St Nicholas.

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Section 5 - Legislative Requirements

Children (Education and Care Services) National Law 2010	**Section 165**	Offence to inadequately supervise children
	Section 167	Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards
	Section 162A	Child protection training
Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011	**Regulation 84**	Awareness of child protection law
	Regulation 155	Interactions with children
	Regulation 103	Premises, furniture, and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair
	Regulation 115	Premises designed to facilitate supervision
	Regulation 168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures
	Regulation 170	Policies and procedures to be followed
	Regulation 171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
	Regulation 172	Notification of change to policies and procedures
	Regulation 181	Confidentiality of records kept by approved provider
	Regulation 183	Storage of records and other documents
National Quality Standards	**Standard 1.1**	Program: The educational program enhances each child's learning and development
	Standard 1.2	Practice: Educators facilitate and extend each child's learning and development
	Standard 1.3	Assessment and planning: Educators and co-ordinators take a planned and reflective approach to implementing the program for each child
	Element 2.2.1	Supervision: At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard
	Standard 3.1	Design: The design of the facilities is appropriate for the operations of a service
	Standard 4.2	Professionalism: Management, educators and staff are collaborative, respectful and ethical
	Standard 5.2	Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships
	Quality Area 6	Collaborative partnerships with families and communities

Section 6 - Document Review

(41) This procedure will be reviewed when there is a legislative change, organisational change, delegations change, technology change or at least every 3 years to ensure it continues to be current and effective.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	3rd September 2025
Review Date	3rd September 2028
Approval Authority	Acting Executive Director of St Nicholas
Approval Date	15th August 2025
Expiry Date	To Be Advised
Unit Head	Melissa Hill Director St Nicholas
Enquiries Contact	St Nicholas Quality Assurance

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Application" - A computer system, program or set of programs designed to perform a specific task or set of tasks and streamline activities and everyday administration. This includes cloud-based applications systems such as software-as-a-service (e.g. Office365, Compass, CCMS (Child Management System)), as well as collaboration and productivity tools.

"St Nicholas employee" - Any worker who is employed by St Nicholas Early Education including office and service-based roles. This incorporates all workers, including office-based and service-based roles who are employed by St Nicholas (excludes those employed in Shared Services).

"St Nicholas team member" - Any St Nicholas Employee who holds a role within a service. This incorporates all service level roles, including leadership, cooks, educators, SBATs and trainees.

"St Nicholas educator" - All service roles who hold (or are working towards) an approved education and care qualification, in Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011 SI 653) regulations 126A, 135 and 324, means— (a) an approved certificate III level education and care qualification; or (b) an approved diploma level education and care qualification; or (c) an approved early childhood teaching qualification.

"St Nicholas Nominated Supervisor" - The Nominated Supervisor has day-to-day responsibility for the service in accordance with the Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011 SI 653). In relation to an education and care service, means a person who: • is nominated by the approved provider of the service to be a nominated supervisor of that service; and • has provided written consent to that nomination Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011 SI 653). In St Nicholas Early Education services, the Nominated Supervisor holds the title of Centre Director.

"St Nicholas Responsible Person" - An individual who is physically present and is responsible for the operation of a centre-based service for an agreed period of time. A responsible person must be present at all times that the approved service operates and can be: • the approved provider or a person with management or control of the service; • a nominated supervisor of the service; or • a person placed in day-to-day charge of the service in accordance with the Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011 SI 653).

"Digital Devices or Technology" - This includes all digital devices within the service or office, such as computers, digital displays, interactive screens, phones, tablets (e.g., iPads), and wearables (e.g. smartwatches), meta glasses.

"Artificial Intelligence" - Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to computer systems capable of performing tasks normally requiring human intelligence such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, problem solving and

translation between languages.

"Harmful content" - Harmful content includes but is not limited to: • Sexually explicit material • False or misleading information • Violence • Extremism or terrorism • Hateful or offensive material.

"Cyberbullying" - The use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature.

"Sexting" - Sending a sexual message or text, with or without a photo or video. It can be done using a phone service or any platform that allows people to connect via an online message or chat function.