

FACILITATOR GUIDE

Created for Respectful Relationships

Conversations for Catholic schools

Session 4: Voice of the Child – Theology for Safeguarding

READY-TO-FACILITATE SCHOOL EDITION

Includes facilitator scripts, session plans, video access, staff activities, printable templates, safeguarding guidance and implementation tools.

In partnership with

Victorian Catholic Education Authority

ACU AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

Purpose of this guide

This guide enables a school leader, formation leader, wellbeing leader, curriculum leader or nominated staff facilitator to deliver the complete five-session series without needing to design additional materials. It is intended to be practical, trauma-aware, grounded in Catholic mission, and adaptable to local school context.

CORE AIM

To build staff confidence and shared language for Consent and Respectful Relationships Education (CRRE), strengthen Catholic identity, and connect safeguarding, formation, student voice and everyday school culture.

What is included

- A complete run sheet for each staff session
- Opening and closing facilitator scripts
- Video links
- Personal reflection, small-group and whole-staff activities
- Printable worksheets and recording templates
- Trauma-aware participation and support guidance
- A school implementation pathway and action-planning tools
- Full video scripts for reference and accessibility

Series at a glance

Session	Title	Core question	Suggested time
1	Why Respectful Relationships Matter	Why is this central to Catholic education?	55–65 min
2	Being and Becoming Human Together	What does it mean to be human in relationship?	50–60 min
3	Life and Life to the Full	What do Jesus-inspired relationships look like?	55–65 min
4	Voice of the Child	Whose voice is heard, and whose is missing?	55–65 min
5	From Vision to Practice	What will we do differently in everyday practice?	60–75 min

Before you facilitate

Recommended facilitator

Choose a facilitator who can hold reflective conversation, maintain clear boundaries, respond calmly to discomfort and connect staff discussion to the school's established safeguarding, wellbeing and professional-learning processes. Co-facilitation is strongly recommended where the group is large or where sensitive discussion is anticipated.

Pre-series planning checklist

☐ Confirm leadership endorsement and the purpose of the series.

☐ Nominate a facilitator and a support person who can step out with any participant who needs assistance.

☐ Confirm local Employee Assistance Program details and the school's internal safeguarding contacts.

☐ Review applicable school, system and jurisdictional safeguarding policies.

☐ Make available the applicable school, system and jurisdictional safeguarding policies for staff.

☐ Facilitator takes time to familiarise themselves with videos and this guide.

☐ Book an accessible room with movable seating and reliable audio-visual equipment.

☐ Print the session worksheets.

☐ Decide how anonymous responses will be gathered and stored.

☐ Communicate the participation choices to staff in advance.

☐ Plan how actions arising from the series will be reviewed by leadership.

Video access

Video	Link
1. Why Respectful Relationships Matter	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQ-bYkLabUs
2. Being and Becoming Human Together	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KspvX1N_jOM
3. Life and Life to the Full	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TomzeGJRm3k
4. Voice of the Child	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2aGlbAjPc5A
5. From Vision to Practice	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2XekbVDrVk

Technical check

- ☐ Video opens and plays.
- ☐ Sound is clear from the back of the room.
- ☐ Holding slide and support slide are ready.
- ☐ Timers, slides and resources are ready before staff arrive.

Suggested room set-up

- Tables of four to six people, allowing staff to speak without addressing the whole room.
- A clear screen and speakers, with captions visible.
- A quiet space outside the room for anyone who needs a pause.
- Four wall stations for Session 1.
- Sticky notes, markers, A3 paper and anonymous response cards.

Safety, participation and support

The topics in this series may connect with participants' personal or professional experiences. The facilitator's task is not to invite disclosure or provide counselling. The task is to establish clear participation choices, maintain professional boundaries, and direct people to appropriate supports.

Opening safety statement

READ ALOUD

Today's session deals with relationships, consent, safety and experiences of harm. You are invited to participate in ways that are professionally useful and personally safe. You may pass on any activity, step out without explanation, or speak with our nominated support person. Please do not share personal stories about students, colleagues or yourself in a way that identifies anyone. This is a professional learning space, not a disclosure or counselling space. If a concern about a child or young person arises, our usual safeguarding and reporting procedures apply.

Group agreements

- ☐ Speak from your own perspective.
- ☐ Protect privacy. Do not repeat personal contributions outside the room.
- ☐ Do not name individual students, families or colleagues.
- ☐ Challenge ideas without attacking people.
- ☐ Allow people to pass, pause or step out.
- ☐ Avoid asking for or offering personal disclosures.
- ☐ Notice the impact of language, not only its intent.
- ☐ If a safeguarding concern arises, follow the process rather than trying to resolve it in the group.

Support information to place on every session slide

Support	Details to display
Immediate danger	Call 000.
1800RESPECT	1800 737 732 | 24/7 national domestic, family and sexual violence counselling.
Lifeline	13 11 14 | Crisis support.
13YARN	13 92 76 | Crisis support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
Employee Assistance Program	Insert school/system EAP provider and contact details.
Internal support	Insert principal, safeguarding lead, wellbeing lead or HR contact.

Support	Details to display
Reporting concerns	Insert school/system child-safety reporting process and link.

If someone becomes distressed

1. Offer choice: remain, take a break, or move to the quiet space. Make this offer discreetly and respectfully, rather than in front of the entire staff community.
2. Ask what practical support the person needs now. Do not ask for details.
3. Connect the person with the nominated support person or EAP.
4. If information suggests a child is at risk, follow safeguarding procedures immediately.
5. Check in privately after the session while maintaining professional boundaries.
6. Document only what is required under policy.

Facilitation approach

Consistent session rhythm

Stage	Purpose	Typical time
Welcome and safety	Re-establish purpose, participation choices and support.	5 min
Watch	Encounter the core idea through the video.	8–12 min
Pause	Allow silent personal reflection before discussion.	3–5 min
Discuss	Make meaning in pairs or small-groups.	15–20 min
Synthesis	Gather patterns, tensions and implications.	10–15 min
Commit	Name one realistic practice or next step.	5–10 min

Facilitator moves that help

- Ask one question at a time and allow silence.
- Invite participants to comment on the idea before debating solutions.
- Use “What makes you say that?”, or “Tell me more about that…” to deepen discussion without confrontation.
- Summarise themes neutrally and distinguish consensus from difference.
- Redirect personal stories toward professional implications.
- Name discomfort without shaming: “This may feel unfamiliar; let’s stay curious and precise.”
- Convert broad intentions into observable actions, owners and review points.

Session 4: Voice of the Child – Theology for Safeguarding

Focus: Student voice, agency and safeguarding

SESSION OUTCOME

Staff can identify how voice, agency, vulnerability and power shape safeguarding.

At a glance

Time	Materials	Outputs
65 minutes	Video, screen, speakers, timer, printed worksheet, pens, A3 paper/sticky notes	1% Shift response and whole-staff themes

Video access

Video title	Voice of the Child
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2aGlbAjPc5A	

Preparation

- ☐ Test the video link.
- ☐ Display the safety and support slide when staff enter.
- ☐ Print ‘Student Voice Audit’ worksheet.
- ☐ Print participant commitment sheets.
- ☐ Choose how whole-staff responses will be captured.
- ☐ Confirm the nominated support person.

Detailed run sheet

Timing	Facilitator action
5 mins	Read the opening script, participation choices and group agreements.
12 mins	Introduce the video with one framing question. Play with captions.
5 mins	Read the reflection question slowly. Protect silence.
20 mins	Explain the activity, group size, output and confidentiality boundary.

Timing	Facilitator action
15 mins	Invite patterns, tensions and implications. Do not require every group to report.
8 mins	Invite a specific commitment. Explain what will happen with collected responses.

Facilitator opening script

READ ALOUD

Today's session asks whose voice is heard and whose voice may be missing. We will hold together two truths: children and young people have agency and insight, and they also need protection, guidance and care. Listening is not an optional courtesy. It is part of safeguarding.

Play the video

Personal reflection

- When I was at school, when did I feel heard?
- When did I feel unheard?
- Without sharing personal details, what does this suggest about the conditions that support student voice?

Small-group activity: Student Voice Audit

Use the Student Voice Audit worksheet. Rate each area High, Medium or Low, based on current evidence rather than intention.

- Classroom participation
- Behaviour and restorative processes
- Wellbeing support
- School decisions
- Curriculum and assessment feedback
- Digital and online issues
- Safeguarding and complaints processes

Group output: identify one strength, one blind spot and one area requiring student input before action is decided.

Whole-staff synthesis

- Where is student voice strongest?
- Where might students feel invisible or unable to disagree?
- What evidence do we need directly from students?

Practical takeaway: 1% Shift

PARTICIPANT COMMITMENT

One way I will more intentionally invite student voice is…

Facilitator close

READ ALOUD

Thank you for engaging thoughtfully. This work is not about having every answer or achieving perfection. It is about taking the next faithful, professionally responsible step together. Please complete your commitment card. The themes gathered today will be used only for the stated school improvement purpose, and we will communicate the next review point.

After the session

- ☐ Secure or de-identify collected responses.
- ☐ Follow up any safeguarding matter through the required process.
- ☐ Brief leadership on themes, actions and support required.

Facilitator debrief notes

What worked well?

What needs adjustment?

Actions or follow-up required?

Video script for Session 4

Voice of the Child – Theology for Safeguarding

In the previous videos, we've explored why respectful relationships matter…
and how they are grounded in a vision of the human person and in the life of Jesus.
But now we turn to something more specific—and more challenging:
Whose voice is heard in our communities?
And just as importantly:
Whose voice is not?

Part 1: Beginning with a Gospel Story
To explore this, I want to begin with a story from the Gospel.
The story of Jairus' daughter.
When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered round him; and he was by the lake. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, 'My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.' So he went with him.
While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, 'Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?' But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, 'Do not fear, only believe.' He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, 'Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.' And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, 'Talitha cum', which means, 'Little girl, get up!' And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.
It's a powerful story of healing and restoration—
a child brought back to life.
But when we read it carefully, something stands out.
The girl herself never speaks.
Others speak about her.
Others act for her.
Others decide what happens.
And while the story is full of hope,
it also invites an uncomfortable question:
What happens when children's voices are missing?
Because if we're not careful,
that silence can become normalised.
And in real life,
that silence can become harmful.

Part 2: Why Voice Matters
Research and experience tell us something important:
When children and young people are not heard,
their vulnerability increases.
When they feel invisible…
when others speak on their behalf…
when their perspectives are dismissed…

harm can deepen.
But the opposite is also true.
When children have a voice—
when they are listened to, taken seriously, and included—
it strengthens:
their sense of belonging
their self-worth
their agency
their safety
And it can interrupt patterns of harm that thrive in silence.
So listening is not just good practice.
It is a safeguarding act.

Part 3: A Theology of Childhood
This also connects deeply with our understanding of childhood.
Children are not just "adults in the making."
They are persons now—with dignity, insight, and agency.
They are, in their own way,
bearers of God's Reign.
And when we pay attention to childhood,
we begin to see something essential about what it means to be human.
I want to highlight three key dimensions of childhood:
Children are relational—they reach for connection from the very beginning.
They are meaning-makers—constantly trying to understand themselves and the world.
And they are agentive—capable of acting, expressing needs, and influencing their environment.
And this matters.
Because if we only see children as vulnerable,
we risk overprotecting in ways that silence them.
But if we only see them as capable,
we risk overlooking their vulnerability.
So safeguarding requires us to hold both together:
agency and vulnerability.

Part 4: Power and Relationships
This is where power comes in.
Because in every school, power is present.
Between staff and students.
Between older and younger students.
Between different social groups.
Power shapes:
whose voice is heard
whose preferences are followed
whose experiences are believed
And without awareness, power can be misused—
sometimes unintentionally.
So part of respectful relationships education
is helping young people—and ourselves—
to understand power:

How it works.
How it can harm.
And how it can be used ethically.
Because consent is not just about saying “yes” or “no.”
It is about whether a person feels free to say either.

Part 5: What This Means in Practice
So what does this look like in a school?
It looks like moving from good intentions
to deliberate practices.
There are four key commitments that can guide us:
First, child-inclusive practice.
We actively seek student voice in decisions that affect them—
not as a token gesture, but as something real.
Second, consent as a way of life.
Not just a topic we teach—but something we model daily.
Checking in.
Waiting for a clear yes.
Respecting no.
Third, holding agency and vulnerability together.
Recognising that young people have insight and capacity—
and need guidance and protection.
And we support students to advocate for themselves—
to express their views, to be heard, and to know that their voice matters.
And fourth, ongoing formation.
Because respectful relationships are not learned once—
they are practiced over time.

Part 6: Everyday Safeguarding
There’s a small but powerful moment at the end of the Gospel story.
After the girl is restored to life, Jesus says:
“Give her something to eat.”
It’s easy to miss.
But it matters.
Because it reminds us that safeguarding is not just about big moments.
It’s about ordinary care.
Listening.
Checking in.
Creating space.
Taking students seriously.
Day after day.
Not just in crisis.
In many ways, safeguarding is built in these small, consistent acts, attending to everyday needs.

Closing
So as we move into discussion, here’s the key idea:
If respectful relationships are about dignity,
then voice is essential.
Because dignity is not just something we recognise in theory.

It is something we honour in practice—
by listening,
by including,
and by creating spaces where young people can speak.
And when we do that,
we don't just protect students.
We help build communities
where life, dignity, and hope
can truly flourish.
Thank you.

Before we delve into the accompanying activities related to this video on the Theology of Safeguarding, let's take a moment to pause and reflect on the concept of student voice and agency.
As a strategic concept it is something that we are very familiar with in our schools.
But the real question is:
How do we truly empower student voice and agency — through our actions to create connections for:
a sense of belonging?
a sense of worth?
a sense of agency?
and most importantly a sense of safety?
In the last video of this series we will explore how to move beyond the policies, strategic plans, Ministerial Orders and Child Safe Standards into human connections. Real change happens when we move from good intentions to deliberate, everyday practices through our interactions.
This is the most powerful work.
Bringing together the essence of respectful relationships:
safeguarding students' lives in those small, consistent acts—
the moments where we attend to children's daily needs,
affirm their voices,
and make space for them to feel safe, valued, and seen.

Printable facilitator resources

Session 4: Voice of the Child

WORKSHEET CONTENT

Student Voice Audit

Purpose

To assess where student voice is meaningfully invited, heard and connected to action, based on current evidence rather than intention.

Rating guide

- High: clear, regular and accessible opportunities exist; student input influences practice and feedback is visible.
- Medium: some opportunities exist, but access, consistency, influence or feedback is uneven.
- Low: opportunities are limited, unclear, inaccessible, tokenistic or not connected to action.
- Not enough evidence: the group cannot make a defensible rating.

1. Audit

Classroom participation

Rating: ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low ☐ Not enough evidence

Evidence for our rating:

_____

_____

Whose voice may be missing?

_____

A question we should ask students:

_____

Behaviour and restorative processes

Rating: ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low ☐ Not enough evidence

Evidence for our rating:

_____

_____

Whose voice may be missing?

_____

A question we should ask students:

_____

Wellbeing support

Rating: ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low ☐ Not enough evidence

Evidence for our rating:

Whose voice may be missing?

A question we should ask students:

School decisions

Rating: ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low ☐ Not enough evidence

Evidence for our rating:

Whose voice may be missing?

A question we should ask students:

Curriculum and assessment feedback

Rating: ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low ☐ Not enough evidence

Evidence for our rating:

Whose voice may be missing?

A question we should ask students:

Digital and online issues

Rating: ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low ☐ Not enough evidence

Evidence for our rating:

Whose voice may be missing?

A question we should ask students:

Safeguarding and complaints processes

Rating: ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low ☐ Not enough evidence

Evidence for our rating:

Whose voice may be missing?

A question we should ask students:

2. Read the pattern

One strength in our current practice is…

One blind spot or inconsistency is…

One area requiring direct student input before action is decided is…

A safe and appropriate way to gather that input could be…

3. Safeguarding check

- Does the method allow students to opt out?
- Is the purpose clear?
- Is privacy protected?
- Are students told what will happen with their input?
- Is there a clear response pathway if a concern is raised?
- Will the school report back on what it heard and what will happen next?

4. Whole-staff synthesis notes

Session 4: Voice of the Child

COMMITMENT CARD CONTENT

My commitment

One way I will more intentionally invite student voice is…

_____

_____

_____

_____

I will do this during…

_____

I will show students their input was heard by…

_____

Keep this card somewhere visible. Revisit it before the next session.