

Commitment to Child Safety

Berengarra takes a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and is fully committed to ensuring that its strategies, policies, procedures and practices meet all Child Safety Standards as specified in Ministerial Order No. 870 (2015)

Berengarra School is fully committed to child safety.

We want our students to be safe, happy and empowered. We support and respect all students, as well as our staff and volunteers.

Berengarra School is committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all students.

We have zero tolerance of child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated very seriously and consistently with our clear policies and procedures.

We have legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a student's safety, which we follow rigorously.

Berengarra School is committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks.

We have excellent human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.

Berengarra School is committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks.

We support and respect all students, as well as our staff and volunteers. We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, the cultural safety of children from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for students with **the disability of social, emotional, behavioural disorders**.

We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments.

If we believe a child is at immediate risk of abuse we will phone 000.

Students

This policy is intended to empower students who are vital and active participants at Berengarra School. We involve them when making decisions, especially about matters that directly affect them. We listen to their views and respect what they have to say.

We promote diversity and tolerance at Berengarra School, and people from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds are welcome. In particular we:

- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children
- promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- ensure that children with social, emotional, behavioural disorders are safe and can participate equally.

Staff and volunteers

This policy guides our staff and volunteers on how to behave with students at Berengarra School.

All of our staff and volunteers must agree to abide by our code of conduct which specifies the standards of conduct required when working with students. All staff and volunteers, as well as students and their families, are given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the code of conduct.

Professional learning & supervision

Professional learning and supervision is important to ensure that everyone at Berengarra School understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

The culture at Berengarra School aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and students), to feel confident and comfortable in discussing any allegations of child abuse or child safety concerns. Staff and volunteers are trained to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse.

We also support our staff and volunteers through ongoing supervision to: develop their skills to protect children from abuse; and promote the cultural safety of Aboriginal students, the cultural safety of students from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, and the safety of students with **the disability of social, emotional, behavioural disorders**.

New employees and volunteers are supervised carefully to ensure that they understand Berengarra School's commitment to child safety and that everyone has a role to play in protecting children from abuse, as well as checking that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate (please refer to Berengarra School's Code of Conduct for further detail). Any inappropriate behaviour is reported through appropriate channels, including the Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police, depending on the severity and urgency of the matter.

Recruitment

We take all reasonable steps to employ qualified staff to work with students. We develop selection criteria and advertisements which clearly demonstrate our commitment to child safety and an awareness of our social and legislative responsibilities. Berengarra School understands that when recruiting staff and volunteers we have ethical as well as legislative obligations.

We actively encourage enrolments from Aboriginal peoples, students from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and students with the **disability of social, emotional, behavioural disorders**.

All people engaged in child-related work, including volunteers, are required to hold a Working with Children Check and to provide evidence of this Check.

Berengarra School carries out reference checks and police record checks to ensure that we are recruiting excellent staff. Police record checks are used only for the purposes of recruitment and are discarded after the recruitment process is complete. We do retain our own records (but not the actual criminal record) if an applicant's criminal history affected our decision-making process.

If during the recruitment process a person's records indicate a criminal history then the person will be given the opportunity to provide further information and context.

Fair procedures for personnel

The safety and wellbeing of our students is our primary concern. We are also fair and just to personnel. The decisions we make when recruiting, assessing incidents, and undertaking disciplinary action will always be thorough, transparent, and based on evidence.

We record all allegations of abuse and safety concerns using our incident reporting form, including investigation updates. All records are securely stored.

If an allegation of abuse or a safety concern is raised, we provide updates to students and families on progress and any actions that we as an educational organisation can take.

Privacy

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved, whether they be staff, volunteers, parents or students, unless there is a risk to someone's safety. We have safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how this information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will have access to it.

Legislative responsibilities

Berengarra School takes its legal responsibilities seriously, including:

- **Failure to disclose:** Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility. All adults in Victoria who have a reasonable belief that an adult has committed a sexual offence against a child under 16 have an obligation to report that information to the police.
- **Failure to protect:** People of authority in our organisation will commit an offence if they know of a substantial risk of child sexual abuse and have the power or responsibility to reduce or remove the risk, but negligently fail to do so.
- Any personnel who are **mandatory reporters** must comply with their duties.

Risk management

In Victoria, organisations are required to protect children when a risk is identified (see information about failure to protect above). In addition to general occupational health and safety risks, we proactively manage risks of abuse to our students.

We have risk management strategies in place to identify, assess, and take steps to minimise child abuse risks, which include risks posed by physical environments (for example, any doors that can lock), and online environments (for example, no staff or volunteer is to have contact with a student in organisations on social media).

Policy review

This policy will be reviewed every two years and following significant incidents if they occur. We will ensure that families and students have the opportunity to contribute. Where possible we do our best to work with local Aboriginal communities, culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities and students with the **disability of social, emotional, behavioural disorders**.

Allegations, concerns and complaints

Berengarra School takes all allegations seriously and has practices in place to investigate thoroughly and quickly. Our staff and volunteers are trained to deal appropriately with allegations.

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

We all have a responsibility to report an allegation of abuse if we have a reasonable belief that an incident took place (see information about failure to disclose above).

Endorsed by Board: Aug 2016; Feb 2018; Oct 2018; Review date: Oct 2020