



**Berengarra  
School**

Hope Belonging Nurturing Success

## **Berengarra School**

### **Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy**

*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. 1359 (2022).*

#### **Purpose**

The Berengarra School Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates our school's commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy provides an overview of our school's approach to implementing [Ministerial Order 1359](#) (PDF, 363KB) which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments.

It informs our school community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

#### **Scope**

This policy:

- applies to all school staff, volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with students. It also applies to school board members where indicated.
- applies in all physical and online school environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided by for a student's use (for example, a school camp) and those provided through third-party providers
- should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes – refer to the related school policies section below.

#### **Definitions**

The following terms in this policy have [specific definitions](#):

- child
- child safety
- child abuse
- child-connected work
- child-related work
- school environment
- school boarding environment
- school staff
- school boarding premises staff
- school governing authority
- school boarding premises governing authority

- student
- volunteer.

## **Statement of commitment to child safety**

Berengarra School is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families.

We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students.

We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our school environments.

We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in our school environment. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, queer, intersex and asexual (LGBTQIA+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our school, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our school has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

### **School leadership team**

Our school leadership and executive teams (comprising the Principal, the Business Manager, Heads of Campus, Head of Wellbeing, Curriculum Coordinators) are responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359.

The Executive and Leadership Team will:

- ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed
- model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing
- enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered

- reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students
- promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the school community including at leadership team meetings, staff meetings and school board meetings
- facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of responding to abuse
- create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.

### **School staff and volunteers**

All staff and volunteers will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the school and always follow the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures
- act in accordance with our Child Safety Code of Conduct
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Procedures (staff handbook), including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

### **The School Board**

In performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, School Board members will:

- champion and promote a child safe culture with the broader school community
- ensure that child safety is a regular agenda item at School Board meetings
- undertake annual training on child safety, NOTE: School Board can use the Child Safe Standards School Council Training slide presentation available on [PROTECT](#).
- approve updates to, and act in accordance with the Child Safety Code of Conduct to the extent that it applies to school council employees and members
- when hiring school employees, ensure that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe. At Berengarra School, school employment duties are delegated to the Principal who is bound by this policy

### **Specific staff child safety responsibilities**

Berengarra School has nominated the Heads of Campus to support the Principal to implement our child safety policies and practices, including staff and volunteer induction and training. The Head of Wellbeing will be nominated as Berengarra School's Child Safety Advocate.

The responsibilities of the child safety advocacy are outlined at [Guidance for Child Safety Champions](#).

Raising child safety queries can be directed towards the Child Safety Advocate.

Any child safety concerns should be discussed in campus debrief at the end of each day

Our Principal and Heads of Campus are the first point of contact for coordinating responses to child safety incidents.

The Principal is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy with support of the Executive Team and the Head of Wellbeing. Anyone in our school community should approach the Principal, Heads of Campus or Head of Wellbeing if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.

The Principal is responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available

The Head of Wellbeing will undertake consultation with each homegroup, at minimum, bi-annually on child safety matters to ensure that student voice is heard around child safety issues within the school. This process also allows for students to have regular reminders about their rights, the avenues for making a complaint and so they are clear on what are appropriate boundaries and expectations for behaviours between staff and students as outlined in the Child Safety Code of Conduct.

Other specific roles and responsibilities are named in other child safety policies and procedures, including the Child Safety Code of Conduct, Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, and Child Safety Risk Register.

Our school has established a Child Safety Leadership Group (Principal, Heads of Campus, Head of Wellbeing). The Child Safety Leadership Group meet regularly to identify and respond to any ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing. The Head of Wellbeing reports back from homegroup consultations at this group to ensure that student voice is heard and considered when making decisions around child safety.

The Principal, Heads of Campus and Head of Wellbeing Team monitors the Child Safety Risk Register.

### **Child Safety Code of Conduct**

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

We ensure that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the school.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

### **Managing risks to child safety and wellbeing**

At our school we identify, assess and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online school environments. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices, and in our activity specific risk registers, such as those we develop for off-site overnight

camp, adventure activities and facilities and services we contract through third party providers for student use.

Our Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. Our Leadership Team will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

### **Assessing Child Safety risks**

- manage risk in physical spaces
- identify and document the school's child safety risks in the school's risk register and ensure strategies are in place to manage those risks.
- consider the range of school environments and the nature of physical spaces including onsite buildings and grounds, classrooms, corridors, and pick-up and drop off areas.
- consider off-site physical environments for student use and where reasonably possible, inspect these sites and venues for events, excursions and camps
- consider risks arising from child-to-child and adult-to-child interactions in physical and online spaces.
- consider cultural safety. Are there elements of the physical school environment that would be unwelcoming to Aboriginal people?
- inform staff, volunteers and students where appropriate of identified risks and risk management strategies
- keep records of risk management activities, including risk assessments for camps and excursions
- provide training and refresher training to staff and relevant volunteers on risk management policies and procedures
- supervise appropriately
- be aware of risks posed by dark spaces, stairwells, private spaces and corners in school environments and develop strategies to address these risks
- inform students about spaces that are off limits, including out-of-bounds areas, storerooms and staff rooms
- nominate ratios of staff and volunteers to students for different types of activities.
- keep records of any court orders in place regarding access or intervention orders and communicate to staff who can collect students in these circumstances.
- use observation aids when appropriate, such as observation windows, concave mirrors, CCTV and consider the balance between appropriate visibility and respecting staff and students' privacy
- undertake works to improve lighting in poorly lit areas
- let students know how to raise concerns and where to go if they need help.
- organise professional learning to discuss risk and harm prevention and hazard awareness with staff, volunteers and School Board members
- keep records of incidents that occur, including accidents and medical events.
- review incidents against policies and procedures, including seeking student feedback on how incidents were handled and how safe they felt, and make improvements as needed
- promote student safety online
- give students opportunities to learn, play, create, entertain, make new friends and stay connected

- facilitate age-appropriate ways to use the internet and social media for students utilising resources from Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships, Safe Schools and also information from the e-Safety Commission

**Inform students about online safety risks, including:**

- cyberbullying and trolling
- invasion of privacy or digital surveillance
- inappropriate sharing of images
- phishing, harvesting of personal information or data theft
- identity theft
- malevolent software (malware)
- offensive images and messages
- Age-inappropriate online content
- impersonation/catfishing
- grooming.
- outline acceptable use of personal devices for students.
- prohibit the use of student email addresses to sign up to unauthorised third-party services and communicate this expectation to students and the school community.
- use filtering software on school-based devices.
- encourage parents to use parental controls on personal devices.
- advise students on how they can seek help from a trusted adult if they are exposed to inappropriate imagery or content that upsets them.
- monitor online activity and respond to breaches of the online policies and procedures with appropriate consequences.
- promote acceptable behaviour by staff and volunteers
- address acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour in online environments in the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- outline acceptable use of personal devices by staff and volunteers.
- have guidelines for taking, storing, and using images of children and students – including photos and video recordings.
- deal with misuse of digital devices and unacceptable behaviour in accordance with school policy.
- review communication protocols regularly, considering emerging services and technologies, such as disappearing message services.
- uphold policies and report breaches in accordance with the school's complaints handling processes and Code of Conduct.
- provide avenues for students, families, carers, communities and staff to report online issues or concerns.
- protect student privacy by supporting students to limit the amount of information provided online.
- require school staff to undertake information security training to reduce the risk of online phishing or malware attacks.

**Procurement and third parties**

- undertake child safety due diligence when engaging third parties. A new vendor presents new risks
- require vendors to provide evidence of compliance with the Child Safe Standards when establishing contracts to deliver services to students
- ensure a Privacy Impact Assessment is undertaken for any software handling student personal information
- make child safety a feature in legal contracts

- ask contractors to provide their Working with Children Check upon entry to the school
- provide contractors with a copy of the Child Safety Code of Conduct and Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- nominate a staff member who is responsible for collecting child safety compliance information about third party providers.
- keep records of due diligence processes
- if a vendor is found to be non-compliant with the Child Safe Standards, cease all activities with the vendor until the issue is resolved, if appropriate, inform the vendor of the non-compliance and provide an opportunity to rectify the problem, or if the issue is serious, contact the relevant authorities

## **Establishing a culturally safe environment**

At Berengarra School we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal students, we recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our school planning, policies, and activities.

We have developed the following strategies to promote cultural safety in our school community and actively support a child or student's ability to express their culture and enjoy their cultural rights in the following ways:

- equip staff, students, volunteers and the school community to acknowledge and appreciate the strengths of Aboriginal culture and understand its importance to the wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal children and students
- adopt measures to ensure racism is identified, confronted and not tolerated
- address any instances of racism within the school environment with appropriate consequences
- actively support participation and inclusion in the school by Aboriginal children, students and their families
- ensure school policies, procedures, systems and processes together create a culturally safe and inclusive environment and meet the needs of Aboriginal children, students and their families
- develop and endorse a policy or statement detailing the strategies and actions the school will take

## **Student empowerment**

To support child safety and wellbeing at Berengarra School, we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support in the school to ensure a sense of belonging, implementing our whole school approach to respectful positive relationships, our student Code of Conduct and our school values.

We inform students of their rights through our student handbook and give them the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students and to speak up and act on concerns relating to themselves or their peers. We ensure our students know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling

unsafe and we encourage them to share concerns with a trusted adult at any time. Students and families can also access information on how to report concerns from our website or speaking to a member of staff.

When the school is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct or abuse of a child, we will listen to the complainant's account and take them seriously. We will check our understanding of the complaint, support the student and keep them (and their parents/guardians/carers as appropriate) informed about progress.

Berengarra school will empower children and students using the following strategies.

- inform students about all their rights, including their rights to safety, information and participation at orientation, through visual means such as posters and regularly through homegroups
- recognise the importance of friendships and encourage support from peers, to help students feel safe and be less isolated
- make sure staff and volunteers:
  - are attuned to signs of child abuse
  - facilitate child-friendly ways for students to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns
- to develop a culture that encourages participation and responds to what students say
- give students opportunities to participate, and respond to their contributions to strengthen confidence and engagement
- offer students access to sexual abuse prevention programs and related information in an age-appropriate way.
- develop curriculum planning documents or other documentation that details how the school will address these requirements.

## **Family engagement**

Our families and the school community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement, at Berengarra School we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our school's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We will create opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.

We do this by:

- all of our child safety policies and procedures will be available for students and parents on our website <https://berengarra.vic.edu.au/> and at our school reception.
- newsletters and/or email will inform families and the school community about any significant updates to our child safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety.
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school within and outside our counsellors' offices.



## **Diversity and equity**

As a child safe organisation, we celebrate the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal children and young people
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- children and young people with disabilities
- children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence
- International students
- children and young people who identify as LGBTQIA+

Our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy provides more information about the measures we have in place to support diversity and equity.

Berengarra School has strategies and actions for diversity and equity that develop and endorse policy and procedures that detail the strategies and actions it will take to uphold diversity and equity, that:

- makes sure school staff and volunteers understand the diverse circumstances of students, provides support, and responds to vulnerable students
- gives students, staff, volunteers and the school community access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand

We pay particular attention to the needs of:

- students with disability
- students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- students who are unable to live at home
- international students
- LGTBQIA+ students
- Aboriginal students

## **Suitable staff and volunteers**

At Berengarra School, we apply child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

### **Staff recruitment**

We make sure job advertisements have clear statements about:

- the job's requirements, duties and responsibilities regarding child safety and wellbeing
- the job occupant's essential or relevant qualifications, experience and attributes in relation to child safety and wellbeing

We advise job applicants about the child safety practices of the school, including the Code of Conduct

We screen school staff applicants by:

- sighting, verifying and recording a Working with Children Check if they person is required to have one or any equivalent background checks such as Victorian Institute of Teaching registration
- collect and record proof of identify, qualifications, history of working with children and references

When engaging staff to perform child-related work, we:

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance or equivalent background check such as a Victorian teaching registration
- collect and record:
  - proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications
  - the person's history of working with children
  - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

### **Staff induction**

All newly appointed staff will be expected to participate in our child safety and wellbeing induction program. The program will include a focus on:

- the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document)
- the Child Safety Code of Conduct
- the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures and
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that school leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

### **Ongoing supervision and management of staff**

All staff engaged in child-connected work will be supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.

Staff will be monitored and assessed to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work.

Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our school policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing will be paramount.

### **Suitability of volunteers**

All volunteers are required to comply with our Volunteers Policy which describes how we assess the suitability of prospective volunteers and outlines expectations in relation to child safety and wellbeing induction and training, and supervision and management.

We screen volunteers by:

- sighting, verifying and recording a Working with Children Check if the person is required to have one or any equivalent background check such as VIT registration
- consider the child safety risks relevant to the volunteer's role and, if reasonable and appropriate, collect and record proof of identify, qualifications, history of working with children and references

- provide an induction to regarding child safety and wellbeing that is appropriate to the nature of the role
- make volunteers aware of the school's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct

### **Child safety knowledge, skills and awareness**

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that staff understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters.

In addition to the child safety and wellbeing induction, our staff will participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

Staff child safety and wellbeing training will be delivered at least annually and will include guidance on:

- our school's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices
- completing the [Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations](#) online module annually
- recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students
- responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and students
- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations
- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment

Other professional learning and training on child safety and wellbeing, for example, training for our volunteers, will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging

### **School Board training and education**

To ensure our school council is equipped with the knowledge required to make decisions in the best interests of student safety and wellbeing, and to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment, the council is trained at least annually. Training includes guidance on:

- individual and collective obligations and responsibilities for implementing the Child Safe Standards and managing the risk of child abuse
- child safety and wellbeing risks in our school environment
- Berengarra School child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices

### **Complaints and reporting processes**

Berengarra School fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the school community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct or abuse to occur and remain hidden.

We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in our school's Complaints and Grievances Policy. Which can be found on the school's website.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers (including School Board members) and must follow our [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures](#). Our policy and procedures address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school.

As soon as any immediate health and safety concerns are addressed, and relevant school staff have been informed, we will ensure our school follows:

- the [Four Critical Actions](#) for complaints and concerns relating to adult behaviour towards a child
- the [Four Critical Actions: Student Sexual Offending](#) for complaints and concerns relating to student sexual offending

Our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and Bullying Prevention Policy cover complaints and concerns relating to student physical violence or other harmful behaviours.

## **Communications**

Berengarra School is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

- ensuring that key child safety and wellbeing policies are available on our website including the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document), Child Safety Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedure
- displaying PROTECT posters around the school
- updates in our school newsletter or via email
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings, staff meetings and School Board meetings.

## **Privacy and information sharing**

Berengarra School collects, uses, and discloses information about children and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy laws, and other relevant laws. For information on how our school collects, uses and discloses information refer to: Berengarra School's Privacy Policy

## **Records management**

We acknowledge that good records management practices are a critical element of child safety and wellbeing and manage our records. Berengarra School in accordance with the Department of Education and Training's policy: [Records Management – School Records](#)

## **Review of child safety practices**

At Berengarra School, we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices.

We will:

- review and improve our policy every 2 years or after any significant child safety incident
- analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice

- act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with school staff and our school community.

### **Related policies and procedures**

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is to be read in conjunction with other related school policies, procedures, and codes. These include our:

- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Complaints and Grievances Policy
- ICT acceptable Use policies
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Complaints and Grievances Policy
- Working with Children Check Policy
- ICT acceptable Use for students
- Bullying, Harassment and discrimination Policy
- External providers and consultants
- Staff appointments and due diligence
- Risk management strategies to reduce and prevent child abuse
- Duty of Care policy
- Privacy of information policy
- Reportable Conduct Policy
- Visitors in Schools Policy

### **Policy status and review**

The Policy Committee is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy at least every two years. The review will include input from students, parents/guardians/carers and the school community.

### **Approval**

<b>Created date</b>	7 June 2022
<b>Consultation</b>	20 June 2022-Parents/Guardians/Carers/School staff/students
<b>Endorsed by</b>	Berengarra School Board
<b>Endorsed on</b>	23 June 2024
<b>Next review date</b>	June 2026