

# STUDENT PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE



BALCOMBE  
GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Balcombe Grammar School was founded in January 2007, having been brought into existence through the efforts of an interim Board which had the vision to provide an affordable Christian school striving for excellence in education, for the families of the Mornington Peninsula.

A co-educational Foundation to Year 12 School governed by a Board of Directors. Members include representatives from churches, parents, individuals with specific expertise, the Business Manager and the Principal. It is operated by a company limited by guarantee.

The school is also a member of Ecumenical Schools Australia (ESA) and Independent Schools Victoria (ISV).

As an inter-denominational school, Balcombe Grammar is dedicated to being a dynamic learning community offering its students an excellent all-round education in the context of the Christian values through nurturing personal relationships and in the development of an attractive physical environment.

The school motto is Visum, Varietas, Contendo, which translates to 'Vision, Diversity and Endeavour'. Students are at the centre of this motto at Balcombe Grammar School (BGS). Their wellbeing and academic progress drive our actions each day as well as informs our plans for the future.

Balcombe Grammar School is committed to ensuring the safety, wellbeing, and participation of all children and young people under our care. Our commitment to keeping children and young people safe cannot be achieved without effectively managing child safeguarding risks.

The CSV Board, the School's governing authority, has approved Balcombe Grammar School's Student Participation and Empowerment Policy and Procedures, as set out in the Policy Administration section, below.

To be a child safe environment, the School must enable and empower students to understand their rights and to participate in all the different decisions that affect them, not just those relating to child safety and wellbeing.

Standard 3 of the Victorian Child Safe Standards is that children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

To implement this Standard, Ministerial Order 1359 places specific obligations on the CSV Board to ensure that:

- the School informs students about all of their rights, including to safety, information and participation
- the School recognises the importance of friendships and encourages support from peers
- the School's Staff and Volunteers are aware of the signs of harm, and facilitate child-friendly ways for students to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns
- the School have strategies to develop a culture that facilitates participation and responds to students' input
- the School provides opportunities for students to participate and is responsive to their contributions.

## Objectives

Balcombe Grammar School places a high priority on promoting the empowerment of our students and their participation in all decisions that affect them, not just those relating to child safety and wellbeing. Establishing an environment of trust and inclusion at the School enables students to speak up if they have concerns. Student voice is important to Balcombe Grammar School and features within our Student Wellbeing Model.

Balcombe Grammar School recognises that students may not disclose child safety incidents or concerns to the School because they:

- do not recognise behaviours as inappropriate, abusive or grooming behaviour; or
- do not know how to raise their concerns or make a complaint.

Having simple and accessible information for students about inappropriate behaviours and about the School's reporting and responding processes assists all students to develop the appropriate knowledge and skills to identify and communicate when they do not feel safe.

This Policy and its Procedures set out the policies, procedures, strategies and practices that the School uses to encourage the participation and empowerment of all students, to establish a child-friendly culture in which students are respected and taken seriously, to promote friendship and encourage peer support, and to provide opportunities for students to participate in decisions that affect them and to respond to their contributions.

## Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Balcombe Grammar School is committed to providing a child safe and child friendly environment, where children and young people are safe and feel safe to actively participate in decisions that affect their lives.

At Balcombe Grammar School we have a zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. The School regards its child safety responsibilities with the utmost importance and as such, is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child safety laws and regulations and maintain a child safe culture.

## Principles

The following three key principles underpin the School's approach to participation of students in decisions at or by the School that affect them:

- Empowerment: which involves students having greater control or say over their lives through participation.
- Purposeful Engagement: which involves students taking on valued roles, addressing issues that are relevant to them, and influencing real outcomes.
- Inclusiveness: which involves ensuring that all students are able to participate.

## Scope

This Policy and its Procedures apply to all Staff, Volunteers and Contractors (together referred to as "Staff" or "staff members" for the purposes of this Policy and its Procedures).

They apply in all School environments, including physical, virtual and online environments, and on-site and off-site School grounds (e.g. extra-curricular activities such as sport and other programs, camps and excursions, interstate and overseas).

## Definitions

Definitions of particular terms used in this Policy and its Procedures can be found in Child Safeguarding Program Definitions.

Of particular importance to this Policy and its Procedures are the following additional key definitions:

### Decisions that Affect Students

Of particular relevance to this Policy and its Procedures is the requirement that students are able to participate in decisions that affect them.

"Decisions that affect students" are not limited to those relating to child safety and wellbeing. They include decisions about:

- organisational planning
- delivery of services
- management of facilities
- learning and assessment environments

## Pastoral Care

Pastoral care is the support given to students for their development as a person. It relates to the total care of students and involves tending to both the academic and non-academic needs of students, including their spiritual, emotional and social wellbeing.

## Resilience

Resilience is the ability to cope and thrive in the face of negative events, challenges or adversity.

## Roles and Responsibilities

In addition to relevant roles and responsibilities as set out in Child Safeguarding Responsibilities, the following people have particular responsibilities under this Policy and its Procedures.

Role	Responsibilities
Principal	Implementing this policy and its procedures.
Deputy Principal – Primary and Deputy Principal Secondary	Managing the involvement of students in School decisions and in policy development and reviews.
Head of Teaching and Learning and the Head of Faith & Wellbeing	Managing the child safety and wellbeing curriculum.

## Balcombe Grammar School's Policy

### 1. Participation

As part of creating and maintaining a child safe environment at the School for all students, the School ensures that all students:

- are engaged and involved in decisions that affect them
- can express their views and raise concerns
- have their views and opinions taken seriously
- are educated about their rights
- are included in policy consultation and development.

The School provides multiple age-appropriate platforms, set out in the Procedures below, to regularly seek students' views about, and to enable students to participate in, decisions that affect them.

The School actively seeks to understand what makes students feel safe in our organisation. We encourage students to provide feedback about child safety concerns and issues at the School, and implement strategies, set out in the Procedures below, to obtain feedback from its students.

The School takes all student contributions seriously, and documents and actively looks for ways to implement improvements to its child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices that reflect these contributions.

The School is honest with students about the extent of their involvement in decision-making and gives feedback on how their views have been taken into account and if, and if so how, they have been actioned.

## 2. Developing and Maintaining a Child Friendly Culture

The School is a child safe and child-centred organisation. We are committed to providing a safe, supportive and social environment, where students feel nurtured as they learn.

The School's physical environments promote students' feelings of inclusion, participation and empowerment.

The School recognises the importance of friendships and peer support in helping students people feel safe and be less isolated. We actively support students to develop and sustain friendships and to receive support from peers through both formal programs and informal mechanisms, set out in the Procedures below.

The School is committed to ensuring that the information and procedures that we have to enable students to raise, and to respond to, child safety concerns are age-appropriate, simple, and accessible for all students, including students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with disability, LGBTIQ+ students and other vulnerable students. For more information, refer to Child Safeguarding Complaints Management Policy and Procedures.

The School openly displays contact details for independent child advocacy and child helpline services throughout the School.

The School provides training and information to Staff, and relevant Volunteers and Contractors, about identifying signs of child abuse and other harm, and about how to help and encourage students to participate in decisions and to raise concerns. For more information, refer to Child Safeguarding Training and Supervision Policy and Procedures.

The School takes a leadership role in raising community awareness of children's rights, child abuse and other harm and its prevention including by:

- actively promoting and participating in civic engagement activities and campaigns which promote whole of community awareness of children's rights, child abuse and other harm, and prevention
- encouraging students at the School to become involved in these activities and campaigns.

## 3. Pastoral Care

Standards of Behaviour for Students Attending the School:

The School:

- has a Student Code of Conduct, developed in consultation with students, that sets out standards of behaviour for all students attending the School, including behaviours relating to child safeguarding. The School promotes the Student Code of Conduct within the School
- has policies on Bullying Prevention and Intervention, Social Media – Student Usage and Harassment (Student Against Student). For more information, refer to our Student Duty of Care Program
- disciplines students who do not uphold these standards of behaviour using our student disciplinary procedures, but also supports these students to address and mitigate behaviours that are not in line with the Code and any underlying factors
- encourages students to tell a trusted adult, whether it's a parent/carer or other family member, a trusted teacher or a Child Safeguarding Officer, when they feel unsafe as a result of or are otherwise impacted by the behaviour of other students.

Child Safety and Wellbeing Curriculum:



The School delivers age-appropriate information and education to all students about:

- healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality)
- child abuse awareness and the right to be safe
- children and young people's rights to make decisions about their body and their privacy
- how they can raise concerns about abuse
- resilience and coping with adversity
- the School's response to child safety incidents and concerns, including that any concerns students raise will be taken seriously and responded to appropriately
- our Child Safeguarding (Safety and Protection) Policy and Procedures, Child Safeguarding (Responding and Reporting Obligations) Policy and Procedures, Child Safety Code of Conduct and Student Code of Conduct.

## Procedures

### 1. Participation

The School follows the Faith & Wellbeing Framework to assist it to meet the above goals.

To encourage and enable students to participate in decisions that affect them, the School uses the following platforms and methods:

- Student Wellbeing Committee
- Faith & Wellbeing classroom discussions
- Year 12 Captains' meetings

To encourage and enable students to provide feedback specifically about safety and wellbeing concerns and issues, including when reviewing our child safeguarding policies, procedures and practices, the School employs a number of strategies, including:

- conducting student focus group
- organising student surveys about particular safety issues at the School about child safety
- child safety and wellbeing concerns as a rolling agenda items for the following meetings
  - SRC
  - Year 12 Captains Group
  - Student Wellbeing Committee
  - Survey's and class discussions

### 2. Developing and Maintaining a Child Friendly Culture

The formal programs used at the School to support students to develop and sustain friendships and receive support from peers include:

- -Tutors Groups
- -House System
- -School buddy program
- Lunchtime wellbeing drop in sessions

The School has, and provides to all students, the following child-friendly versions of our child safeguarding policies and procedures:

- Conducted during Faith & Wellbeing classes, class circle times and through the use of external facilitators.



### 3. Pastoral Care

Child Safety and Wellbeing Curriculum

The School includes the following topics in the curriculum for each year level:

#### Healthy and Respectful Relationships, Sexuality and Resilience

The teaching of healthy and respectful relationships, including sexuality, and skills relating to resilience assists students to grow and develop into healthy, mature adults, capable of realising their full potential.

Healthy and respectful relationships, sexuality and resilience education at the School is:

- imparted during Faith & Wellbeing sessions and Health Education classes
- enshrined in core pedagogical practices that are age-appropriate, respectful, sensitive of culture and family background and differentiated to support the learning and developmental needs of the child or young person

#### Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention

The School's curriculum includes age-appropriate education for students on child safety awareness and child abuse and harm prevention, to build their capacity to:

- identify when they feel safe and unsafe and when they are at risk, including when online
- identify safe and unsafe touching (using the anatomical names for their body parts)
- promote their personal safety (avoiding harm where possible)
- seek help, using their identified safety networks
- overcome barriers to disclosure, for example guilt or disbelief.

The School considers best practice when providing access to or selecting providers of child abuse and harm prevention education.

#### Child Safeguarding Information and Communication

To ensure that students can identify inappropriate behaviour and know how to raise concerns, the School provides child-friendly versions of the following Policies and Procedures to all students:

- Conducted during Faith & Wellbeing classes, class circle times and through the use of external facilitators.

The School also provides all students with information about the above topics, as well as other child safety and wellbeing topics, through various age-appropriate pastoral care initiatives and other communication methods, including:

- Year level assemblies
- Year level specific wellbeing sessions (internally and externally facilitated)
- Year 12 Retreat
- Year level specific camps
- Tutor Group sessions
- Faith & Wellbeing classes

### Implementation

This Policy and its Procedures are made available to all Staff, Volunteers, and Contractors, via the School's intranet. They are included in induction training and in ongoing refresher training for Staff and relevant Volunteers and Contractors. For more information, refer to **Child Safeguarding Training and Supervision Policy and Procedures**.

They are made available to parents/carers, students and the wider School community in summary in our **Child Safeguarding (Safety and Protection) Policy and Procedures** as well as school newsletters, direct written correspondence and the parent portal - BGSHub. It is also available in hard copy by request.

## Breach of Student Participation and Empowerment Policy and Procedures

Balcombe Grammar School enforces this Policy and its Procedures. In the event of any non-compliance, we will instigate a review that may result in a range of measures including (depending on the severity of the breach):

- remedial education
- counselling
- increased supervision
- the restriction of duties
- appointment to an alternate role
- suspension
- in the case of serious breaches, termination of employment, contract or engagement.

For more information, refer to **Compliance and Breach (Child Safeguarding) Policy and Procedures**.

## Policy Review

A review of the Student Participation and Empowerment Policy and Procedures is conducted every two years or earlier if required, such as due to changes in legislation.

The Principal is responsible for ensuring that this Policy is reviewed and updated as needed and for approving this Policy.

## Source of Obligation

Balcombe Grammar School's Student Participation and Empowerment Policy and Procedures implements:

- Victorian Child Safe Standards, Standard 3
- Ministerial Order 1359, Clause 7

## Policy and Procedure Linkages

The Student Participation and Empowerment Policy and Procedures is to be read and understood in conjunction with:

- Child Safeguarding (Safety and Protection) Policy and Procedures
- Family and Community Involvement in Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Child Safeguarding Complaints Management Policy and Procedures
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students Policy and Procedures (Child Safeguarding)
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students Policy and Procedures (Child Safeguarding)
- Students with Disability Policy and Procedures (Child Safeguarding)
- LGBTQIA++ Inclusion Policy
- Regular Reviews and Continuous Improvement Policy and Procedures
- Child Safeguarding Training and Supervision Policy and Procedures
- Compliance and Breach (Child Safeguarding) Policy and Procedures
- Faith & Wellbeing scope and sequence for document resources

## References and Resources

Victorian Commission for Children and Young People, NSW Office of the Children's Guardian and the University of South Australia's Australian Centre for Child Protection, [Participation and Empowerment: A guide for organisations working with children and young people](#), 2021.

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## Policy Administration

<b>Status</b>	Subject to final Board Approval
<b>Person Responsible</b>	The Principal
<b>Approver(s)</b>	The CSV Board is responsible for ensuring that the policy and its procedures are reviewed and updated as needed, and for approving this policy
<b>Approval Date</b>	TBC
<b>Version Number</b>	1.0
<b>Version History</b>	Created 2022
<b>Review Frequency</b>	A review of this policy and its procedures is conducted at least every 2 years or earlier if required, such as due to changes in legislation
<b>Next Review Date</b>	January 2023
<b>Risk Rating</b>	High
<b>Location</b>	CompliSpace