

# STUDENT PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES

This **Student Participation and Empowerment Policy and Procedures (Policy)** outlines how Balcombe Grammar School ensures students are empowered about their rights, actively participate in decisions affecting them, and are taken seriously. It has been developed in accordance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards and Ministerial Order 1359, *Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises*, made under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic).

This Policy is publicly available on our website, along with other child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures. This includes our **Child Safety Dictionary**, which lists the key definitions used in these policies and procedures.

If you would like a paper copy of this Policy, or are a non-English speaker who needs help to understand this Policy, please contact Natalie Kurelja – Head of Faith & Wellbeing.

## Objectives

Balcombe Grammar School places a high priority on empowering our students and encouraging them to participate in all decisions that affect them, not just those relating to child safety and wellbeing.

This Policy provides the framework for how Balcombe Grammar School ensures that we:

- inform students about all of their rights, including to safety, information and participation
- promote a child friendly and inclusive culture in which students are respected and taken seriously
- recognise the importance of student friendships and encourage peer support
- provide opportunities for students to participate in decisions that affect them
- value their views and input and are responsive to their contributions
- train Staff, and relevant Volunteers and Contractors, to be aware of the signs of harm and abuse and facilitate child friendly ways for students to raise any concerns.

We acknowledge 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.

Student voice is important to Balcombe Grammar School and features within our **Student Wellbeing Model**.

Maintaining an environment of trust and inclusion at Balcombe Grammar School enables students to speak up if they have concerns. Providing easy and accessible information for students about inappropriate behaviours and the School's responding and reporting processes helps students develop the appropriate knowledge and skills to identify and communicate when they do not feel safe.

When referring to 'decisions that affect' students in this Policy, this includes (but is not limited to) decisions about:

- child safety and wellbeing
- organisational planning
- delivery of our services
- management of our facilities
- our learning and assessment environments.

## Scope

This Policy applies to all:

- Staff, Volunteers and Contractors
- School environments, including physical, virtual and online places on-site and off-site, including locations provided by Balcombe Grammar School through a third party provider for a student to use (e.g. extra-curricular activities such as sport and other programs, camps and excursions, interstate and overseas).

## Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities for child safety are set out in our **Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy**. Additionally, under this Policy, the following people have particular responsibilities:



Role	Responsibilities
<b>Principal</b>	<b>The Principal</b> is responsible for implementing this Policy.
<b>Deputy Principal – Primary, Deputy Principal – Secondary, Head of Faith &amp; Wellbeing</b>	<b>The Deputy Principals and Head of Faith &amp; Wellbeing</b> are responsible for managing the involvement of students in School decisions and reviews.
<b>Staff, Volunteers and Contractors</b>	<b>Staff and relevant Volunteers and Contractors</b> are responsible for undergoing child safety induction and training, including about this Policy, and for complying with this Policy.  For more information, refer to our <b>Child Safety Training and Supervision Policy and Procedures</b> and the 'Breach' section below.

## Policy

### 1. Participation

The following principles underpin Balcombe Grammar School's approach to participation of students in decision-making that affects them:

- empowerment – we encourage students to have greater control over, and say in their lives through active participation
- purposeful engagement – we provide opportunities for students to take on valued roles, address issues that are relevant to them, and influence real outcomes
- inclusiveness – we ensure that all students are able to participate.

As part of creating and maintaining child safe and child friendly environments, Balcombe Grammar 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.

We provide multiple age-appropriate platforms to regularly seek students' views about decisions that affect them and enable them to meaningfully participate. We actively seek to understand what makes students feel safe in our School. We encourage students to provide feedback about child safety and wellbeing concerns and issues, and implement strategies, to obtain feedback from its students as set out in 'Procedures' below.

The School takes all student contributions seriously. We document and enthusiastically look 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 so, how they have been actioned.

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

Balcombe Grammar School is committed to providing our students with child safe, child friendly and supportive environments that promote feelings of inclusion, participation and empowerment, and where students feel nurtured as they learn.

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

We ensure that the information, policies and procedures we have to assist students to raise child safety concerns and know how Balcombe Grammar School will respond are age-appropriate, easy to understand, culturally safe and accessible to all students, including students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with disability, LGBTQIA+ students and other vulnerable students.

For more information, see our **Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures** and **Child Safety Complaints Management Policy and Procedures**. We openly display 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 how to identify signs of child abuse and harm, help and encourage students to raise concerns, and participate in decision-making. For more information, see our **Child Safety Training and Supervision Policy and Procedures**.

Balcombe Grammar School takes a leadership role in raising community awareness of children's rights, child abuse and 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

Pastoral care refers to the support we provide 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.

In addition to our child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures, Balcombe Grammar School:

- has a **Student Code of Conduct**, developed in consultation with students and promoted within the School, that sets out standards of behaviour for all students attending the School, including behaviours relating to child safety and wellbeing
- has a **Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy** and **Social Media – Student Usage and Harassment (Student Against Student) Policy**
- applies our student disciplinary procedures to students who do not uphold our standards of behaviour using whilst also providing support so that students can address and mitigate behaviours not in line with the Student Code and any underlying factors
- encourages students to tell a trusted adult, whether it's a parent, carer or other family member or , teacher or a Child Safety Officer, when they feel unsafe as a result of or are otherwise impacted by the behaviour of other students
- 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
  - their rights to make decisions about their body and their privacy
  - how they can raise concerns about abuse and harm and how we will respond to them
  - resilience and coping with adversity.

## Procedures

### 1. Participation

The School follows the **Faith & Wellbeing Framework** to assist it to meet our student participation and empowerment goals.

We have a number of strategies and initiatives to give students opportunities to provide feedback and participate in reviews of our child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures, and raise any child safety and wellbeing concerns and issues, including via:

- student focus groups
- student surveys
- Faith & Wellbeing classroom discussions

- meetings and forums where child safety and wellbeing are rolling agenda items (e.g. SRC, Year 12 Captains Group and Student Wellbeing Committee).

## 2. Creating 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 their peers include our:

- tutor groups
- School house system
- School buddy program
- lunchtime wellbeing drop in sessions.

## 3. Pastoral Care

Balcombe Grammar School includes the following topics in its 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. This education is:

- provided during Faith & Wellbeing 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 student.

### ***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.

### ***Providing Child Safety Information***

To ensure that students can identify inappropriate behaviour and know how to raise concerns, we have easy to understand child safety policies and procedures which we communicate to our students in age-appropriate ways via:

- our Faith & Wellbeing classes
- class circle times
- Year level assemblies
- Year level specific child safety and wellbeing sessions (internally and externally facilitated)
- Year level specific camps and our Year 12 Retreat
- our tutor groups

### **Breach**

Compliance with this Policy is monitored and enforced by Balcombe Grammar School. Any instances of non-compliance are investigated and reviewed. This may result in a range of measures being taken, including (depending on the severity of the breach):

- remedial education

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- 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.

## Review

Balcombe Grammar School is committed to the continuous improvement of our child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures.

We review this Policy at least every two years or earlier if required, such as due to changes in legislation or after any significant child safety incident. This includes seeking input from students, parents and carers and the Balcombe Grammar School community.

## Related Policies and Procedures

- Child Safety Dictionary
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Child Safety Training and Supervision Policy and Procedures
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures
- Child Safety Complaints Management Policy and Procedures
- Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy
- Social Media – Student Usage and Harassment (Student Against Student) Policy
- Student Code of Conduct
- Student Wellbeing Model
- Faith & Wellbeing Framework
- Regular Reviews and Continuous Improvement Policy and Procedures

## 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.

## Policy Administration

<b>Status</b>	Approved by the Board on 8 February, 2023
<b>Person Responsible</b>	The Principal
<b>Approver(s)</b>	The CSV Board is responsible for approval of the Policy and ensuring it is reviewed and updated as needed.
<b>Approval Date</b>	8 February, 2023
<b>Version Number</b>	1.0
<b>Version History</b>	Created 2022
<b>Review Frequency</b>	At least every 2 years or earlier if required.
<b>Next Review Date</b>	January 2024
<b>Risk Rating</b>	High
<b>Location</b>	CompliSpace