



Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework that sets out clear guidelines and directions for the implementation of this policy, including the legal requirements for reporting and behaviour expectations of those responsible (under the scope of this policy) to prevent abuse and neglect, ensuring children are safeguarded in all settings. The policy also exists to increase awareness and understanding among staff, students, volunteers, third-party contractors and the community about child protection, and to promote wellbeing by supporting the physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing of children by fostering a child safe and supportive environment.

St Margaret's Berwick Grammar (the **School, SMBG**) values and respects every student and is committed to providing them with an outstanding education in a safe and inclusive environment. This policy consolidates several policies that have been developed and implemented by the School to provide a safe school environment and protect the emotional, psychological and physical wellbeing of students.

SMBG regards its child protection responsibilities as being of the utmost importance and so is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection statutory requirements with a focus on maintaining and protecting a child safe culture. The School is committed to supporting and upholding the Victorian Government's Child Safe Standards complying with Ministerial Order 1359.

Refer to Appendix 1 of this policy for the application of these standards at St Margaret's Berwick Grammar

SMBG acknowledges that it has a legal and moral duty to protect its students from foreseeable harm. This includes the provision of safeguards against mistreatment and the prompt reporting and effective management of actual, suspected or alleged child abuse.

SCOPE

SMBG's Child Safe and Wellbeing Policy applies to all members of the School Community, including

- all staff members, including non-teaching staff and temporary or casual staff
- council members
- volunteers, including International Student Accommodation Providers
- parents and guardians
- third party contractors
- all external education providers
- visitors

This policy applies across all School environments including outside the physical school environment (excursions, camps and tours and accommodation providers with international students temporarily residing with them) and the online environment. This policy also applies to international students, for whom the School has extended additional duty of care responsibilities.

Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing

St Margaret's Berwick Grammar is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This commitment remains the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

At SMBG we have a zero tolerance for child abuse.

SMBG is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are and feel safe, and where their voices are heard with respect to decisions that affect their education and their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the needs of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as the safety of children with a disability or vulnerability, international students, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) students and students who are unable to live at home.

Every individual involved with the Schol has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they individually and collectively play to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all students, children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.

Child Protection, Safety and Wellbeing Principles

SMBG's commitment to child safety and the development of the SMBG Child Safety Program is based on the following overarching principles that guide the development and regular review of work systems, practices, policies and procedures to protect children from abuse:

- all children have the right to be safe.
- the wellbeing and best interests of the child are paramount and are prioritised.
- the views of the child must be considered, and a child's privacy must be respected.
- clear expectations for appropriate behaviour with children are established in our Child Safety Code of Conduct, the Employee Code of Conduct and the Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Guideline.
- the safety of children is dependent upon the existence of an appropriate and compliant child safe culture including an environment where any form of racism or abuse will not be tolerated.
- child safety and wellbeing awareness is promoted and openly discussed within our School and the School community
- through effective and accessible communication, families are encouraged to participate in decisions related to child safety and wellbeing which affect their child. The school Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Code of Conduct seeks family and community input.
- children are empowered by informing them of their rights and responsibilities and are encouraged to speak up about any matters of importance to them, including if something goes wrong. SMBG works to include the participation of children and young people in decision making regarding any matters affecting their welfare and/or safety.
- SMBG will diligently engage external education providers and other third-party contractors to ensure they meet all child safe compliance requirements and protocols.
- the school's safety culture is underpinned by an understanding that child safety and protection is everyone's responsibility.

- child protection training is mandatory for all Council members, Council sub committees, staff, contractors and volunteers.
- any form of abuse or neglect towards children and young people will not be tolerated and immediate action will be taken to report of any suspected harmful or abusive behaviour.
- procedures for responding to alleged or suspected incidents of child abuse are simple and accessible for all members of the School community.
- children have the right to a culturally safe school environment in which their diverse and unique identities are respected and valued. This includes those who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
- SMBG will pay particular attention to children who have any kind of disability or vulnerability, who are from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, children who are unable to live at home, international students and lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) students.
- the Child Safety Program should be regularly reviewed and improved upon.

Implementation

Child Safety and Risk Management

SMBG Child Safety and Risk Management has adopted a risk management approach to the development of a Child Safety Program by identifying key risk indicators and assessing child safety risks based on a range of factors. These include the nature of the School's activities physical and online environments and the diversity of the student cohort and developing ways to mitigate against each identified risk.

SMBG has implemented several risk management policies and procedures to

- provide a safe learning environment for its students.
- identify risks of child abuse and mitigate those risks.
- assist staff to detect child abuse
- care for a student who may be a victim of abuse
- report suspected or known child abuse to appropriate authorities

SMBG is committed to monitoring its practices and procedures to ensure the highest standard of care for its students and will seek to continually improve its practices and procedures for the ongoing safety of our students.

Child Safety Code of Conduct

SMBG has a Child Safety Code of Conduct which outlines expectations of professional conduct, and standards to which all members of the SMBG Community must adhere, as outlined in this policy scope. The overarching principle guiding all adult behaviours is that the safety of all students is paramount.

Suitable Staff

SMBG conducts a rigorous screening and recruitment process that includes exacting reference checks. All applicants for employment at SMBG are informed of the School's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures.

In addition:

- all teachers must be registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching.
- all Education Support (ES) staff must have a current Working with Children Check clearance.

- all new staff must undertake a National Police Check.

New staff will undergo an induction program that includes comprehensive training pertaining to their duty of care, child protection, identification and risk indicators of child abuse, and the statutory obligations requiring that all staff must be aware of their obligations in reporting child abuse. All new staff must sign an agreement indicating that they have read, understood, and will abide by the SMBG Child Safe and Wellbeing Policy and Child Code of Conduct.

*Suitable Volunteers and Third Party Contractors*¹

All procurement contracts require written consent from the contractor to comply with the SBMG Child Safety Program in the goods and services they provide. Volunteers and third-party contractors who access the school environment are required to complete child safe induction training in addition to holding and presenting a current Working With Children Check.

Visitors

During school hours all visitors must be clearly identified by signing in at the relevant reception areas of the School and always wearing their identification as provided by the School.

Staff are required to be vigilant about visitors (including parents / guardians) to the School and speak with anyone who cannot verify their identification and the purpose of their visit.

Diversity and Inclusion

At SMBG, we prioritise cultural safety and inclusivity for all children, including those from diverse backgrounds and those with disabilities. We believe these principles are essential for the safety of every child. We pay special attention to the safety needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and their families, culturally diverse students, students with disabilities, and students who may be vulnerable. Any inappropriate or harmful behaviours, directed at students based on these or other characteristics, is not tolerated at our school. We take immediate action to address and resolve such instances.

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. Great care is taken throughout the School to ensure there is zero tolerance of both direct and indirect racism and discrimination, paying 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 and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.
- Children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD)
- 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 LGBTIQ+.

Bullying and Harassment

SMBG has zero tolerance for bullying or harassment of any kind. There are clear guidelines for students on how to respond to an incident of bullying, including bringing it to a trusted adult's attention as quickly as possible. These are outlined in the Anti-Bullying, Harassment and Violence Policy.

¹ SAM4Schools - Registration of Providers of Goods and Services (POGS) and Volunteers.

Online Safety

SMBG acknowledges that students routinely access online environments and therefore has in place policies, online codes of conduct, guidelines and educational programs to define, support and encourage safe behaviours.

The School implements procedures and communicates guidelines to parents/guardians and students to promote the safety of all students participating in any School authorised education programs that are delivered through an online school environment. Guidelines that are communicated to parents/guardians will outline the role and responsibilities of parents in ensuring a safe online learning environment including, for example, their responsibility for monitoring online safety at home

Reporting Child Abuse or Child Protection Concerns

The School has developed and implemented the following procedures for reporting and responding to allegations of child abuse. Student Safety Officers work with senior leaders to create a child safe environment in the School. The senior leaders listed below have a specific responsibility for responding to any complaints made by staff, volunteers, parents or children.

Student Safety Officers

There are a number of staff at each campus (2) who directly support students at risk of child abuse. These are reviewed annually

These staff members are supported by school leaders including

- The Principal
- The Vice Principal
- The Heads of Senior School
- The Heads of Students
- The Director of the ELC
- The Head of the Junior School
- The Inclusive Education Leader
- The Director of Positive Humanity
- The School Counsellors

Provide Support and Guidance

The management of complaints pertaining to child safety matters are child focused and are centred around the protection, immediate and ongoing safety and support of the child, and includes:

- reporting the allegation, suspicion, or disclosure of child abuse to the relevant authority
- protecting the child connected to the complaint until the complaint is resolved; and
- making, securing, and retaining records of the complaint and the response of the school in managing the matter
- promoting a culture of listening to students and families and acting on their child safety concerns.
- supporting staff and volunteers to focus on the child safety needs of vulnerable students.
- being a point of contact for child safety concerns for staff, volunteers and students.
- providing guidance to students, staff and volunteers on child safety policies and procedures.
- working with school leadership to respond to child safety incidents.
- maintaining current skills and knowledge to support child safety and wellbeing,

including:

- a child-focused complaint processes, reporting obligations and **the Four Critical Actions (PDF-215KB)**.
- student rights, participation and empowerment.
- Aboriginal cultural safety and inclusive practices to meet students' diverse needs.
- child safety risk management including online safety.
- child safety information sharing and record-keeping obligations.
- working with relevant agencies to refer students and families to appropriate support.
- keeping across emerging research and best practice guidance in child safety and wellbeing.

Train and Educate

- Provide child safety induction programs for new school staff, volunteers and school council members.
- Provide child safety training for school staff, volunteers and school council members.
- Ensure mandatory reporters complete the annual mandatory reporting training.
- Provide child safety updates and information to staff and volunteers, as needed.

Monitor, Review and Report

- Record child safety complaints and concerns and analyse trends as needed.
- Coordinate reviews following significant safety incidents and recommend improvements.
- Maintain the school's child safety risk register with the school leadership team.
- Coordinate Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and practice reviews in consultation with the school community.
- Maintain detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals.

Roles and Responsibilities

Child protection is everyone's responsibility. At SMBG all members of the Council, the Principal, Child Safety Officers and staff, as well as volunteers, have a shared responsibility for contributing to the safety and protection of children. All volunteers, contractors and External Educational Providers are required to actively support the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and be an integral part of ensuring a culture of child safety.

Specific responsibilities include

School Council

The School Council is responsible for providing governance oversight, to ensure that appropriate resources are made available to allow the School's Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct to be effectively implemented within the School and are responsible for holding the Principal and Executive Team accountable for effective implementation.

The Principal

The Principal is responsible and will be accountable for taking all practical measures to ensure that this Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct are implemented effectively and that a strong and sustainable child protection culture is maintained within the School.

The Principal and the Vice Principal(s) are the first point of contact for child safety concerns and queries for coordinated responses to child safety incidents.

The Vice Principal will act as the Chief Student Safety Officer to support the Principal to implement our child safety policies and practices including staff and volunteer training.

- The Principal or Vice Principal is responsible for informing the school community about this policy and making it publicly available.
- Anyone in our school community should approach the Principal if they have any concerns about compliance with this policy.

The Executive Leadership Team

The SMGB Leadership Team is 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 Heads of Students and the Heads of the Junior School and the Senior Schools 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 council 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.
- ensuring thorough and vigorous practices are applied in the recruitment, screening and ongoing professional development of staff and volunteers.
- ensuring that the School has in place appropriate risk management strategies and practices that focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks related to child safety and wellbeing in the school environment.
- ensuring that the School takes specific action to protect children from abuse in line with the three new criminal offences introduced under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) and in line with **PROTECT: Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian Schools**.
- ensuring that the School understands and reports all matters that may constitute reportable conduct under the Reportable Conduct Scheme in accordance with the School's Reportable Conduct Policy.
- sharing information under legislated information sharing schemes (CISS and FVISS) in accordance with the School's prescribed role as an Information Sharing Entity - **Information Sharing and MARAM Guidance (2025)**.

- ensuring that the School monitors and reviews the risk related to child safety and wellbeing, including evaluating the effectiveness of the implementation of its risk controls on an annual basis.

School Staff and Volunteers will

- be familiar with the content and be supportive of Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct
- treat children and young people with dignity and respect, acting with propriety, providing a duty of care and protecting children and young people in their care.
- provide a physically and psychologically safe environment where the wellbeing of children and young people is nurtured.
- undertake regular training and education in order to understand their individual responsibilities in relation to child safety, and the wellbeing of children and young people, including ways to prevent, identify and mitigate risks relating to child safety and wellbeing.
- Assist children and young people to develop positive, responsible and caring relationships and behaviours which recognise the rights of all people to be safe and free from abuse.
- 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 **Responding to Student Safety Concerns, Reporting Obligations**, including following the **Four Critical Actions Poster for Schools** and the **Four Critical Actions Poster for Early Childhood** .
- ensure that 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.

Policy Review

SMGB is committed to the continuous improvement of our Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct. The Child Safe and Wellbeing Policy is approved and endorsed by the SMGB Council and is reviewed every two years or following any developments in Child Protection and Safety best practices or changes to legislation.

Communication of this Policy

This policy is posted on the School website and on Nexus. Child safety and wellbeing is further communicated via assemblies and student briefings.

Parents/Guardians can access the policy via the School website.

Key Related Policies and Resources

Child Safety Code of Conduct

Education and Training Reform Act 2006

ELC Guidelines Taking Images or Videos of Children

[Failure to disclose offence | Department of Justice and Community Safety Victoria](#)

Failure to Protect Offence

Information Sharing and MARAM Guidance (2025)

Ministerial Order 1359

Privacy Policy

Recordkeeping Policy

Reportable Conduct Policy

Responding to Student Safety Concerns - Reporting Obligations.

Staff Recruitment and Selection Policy

Staff and Student Professional Boundaries Policy and Guidelines

Student Safety Definitions Document

Volunteers Policy

Working With Children Check

PROTECT:

Four Critical Actions Poster for Early Childhood

Four Critical Actions Poster for Schools

Identifying and responding to all forms of abuse in Victorian Schools.

Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: Template for all Victorian Early Childhood Services

Responding to Suspected Child Abuse: Template for Victorian Schools

NON COMPLIANCE WITH THIS POLICY OR WITH CODE OF CONDUCT

SMBG will enforce this policy and the Code of Conduct. Following any non-compliance, SMBG will instigate a review that may result in restriction of duties, suspension or termination of employment or other corrective action.

Review

This policy was reviewed by the Executive Leadership Team in February 2026 and is reviewed every two years or following any developments in Child Protection and Safety best practices or changes to legislation.

Policy Title	Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
Policy Owner	Principal
Effective Date	February 2026
Review Date	February 2028
Published	Website, Nexus



Appendix 1: Application of Child Safe Standards

The following sections outline the ways in which St Margaret's Berwick Grammar ensures a Child Safe environment.

1. **SMBG is committed to Child Safe Standard 1** – Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued. To this end, the following structures, policies and procedures are in place:
 - Acknowledgement of Country takes place at the start of significant School events
 - Bullying and Harassment policy explicitly promotes inclusion and sets out consequences for racism vilification
 - curriculum experiences to promote understanding and celebration of Aboriginal people and culture
 - Reconciliation week is formally recognised
 - Students are encouraged to celebrate their culture through specific days, events and assemblies
2. **SMBG is committed to Child Safe Standard 2** – Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture. To this end, the following structures, policies and procedures are in place:
 - Public commitment to Child Safety on website, staff portal and in all handbooks
 - Child safe culture fostered at Executive level through regular discussion of child safe matters
 - Cyclical professional learning for all staff in child safe procedures and policies
 - Policy review of all policies relating to child safety either annually or every 2 years
 - Child safe culture fostered at Council Level through regular reporting and training on child safe matters
 - Child Safety Code of Conduct including volunteers
 - Risk management policies and procedures focused on child safety including:
 - Emergency Management Plan
 - OH&S Policies including storage of hazardous materials
 - Risk Management Framework, including specific Child Safety Risk Register
 - Procedures for sharing information and managing confidential information via Privacy Policy and Records Management Policy
3. **SMBG is committed Child Safe Standard 3** – Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously. To this end, the following structures, policies and procedures are in place:
 - assemblies promoting student voice
 - complaint procedures and policies
 - his policy ensures that staff can recognise possible signs of harm
 - swift response to student concerns
 - sessions regarding consent and sexual abuse prevention delivered through the Positive Humanity program (Growing Good Men Empowerment)
4. **SMBG is committed to Child Safe Standard 4** - families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing. To this end, the following

structures, policies and procedures are in place:

- information evenings
- learning conferences
- Parent Handbooks
- letters and newsletters about key events and excursions
- Enrolment Contract
- annual parent surveys where all parents are invited to provide detailed feedback
- regular Principal's updates.

5. SMBG is committed to Child Safe Standard 5

Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice. To this end, the following structures, policies and procedures are in place:

- staff induction program
- complaints handling policy and procedure
- School Values Statement
- staff briefings
- International Student Coordinator

6. SMBG is committed to Child Safe Standard 6

People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice. To this end, the following structures, policies and procedures are in place:

- Staff Recruitment Policy
- staff and volunteer induction programs
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- professional learning processes
- contractor induction program
- WWCC Policy

7. SMBG is committed to Child Safe Standard 7

Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused. To this end, the following structures, policies and procedures are in place:

- Various policies (Discipline, Bullying and Harassment etc.) outline processes for raising concerns
- Complaints policies
- Privacy Policy
- processes in place for Reportable Conduct
- this policy

8. SMBG is committed to Child Safe Standard 8

Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through

- ongoing education and training. To this end, the following structures, policies and procedures are in place:
- staff and volunteer induction processes

- regular professional learning sessions relating to Child Safe Standards
- regular Child Safety Officer training

9. SMBG is committed to Child Safe Standard 9

Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed. To this end, the following structures, policies and procedures are in place:

- Acceptable Use of ICT Policy
- internet filtering systems
- staff professional learning in acceptable use of ICT
- Apps approval process
- monitoring of student devices
- parent, student and staff information sessions
- Risk Management for camps and excursions
- OH&S Processes for managing dangerous substances and equipment

10. SMBG is committed to Child Safe Standard 10

Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is cyclical reviewed and improved. To this end, the following structures, policies and procedures are in place:

- policy review cycle
- reporting and reviewing of child safety matters and incidents and accidents at governance, Executive and OH&S meetings
- review meetings after each emergency evacuation
- investigation of complaints and documentation of contact with staff and parents in relation to complaints
- reporting of staff, student and parent satisfaction to the School Council to parents via the Annual Report and students (as appropriate) via assemblies

11. SMBG is committed to Child Safe Standard 11

Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people. To this end, the following structures, policies and procedures are in place:

- policies reviewed by Executive Team to ensure clarity
- policies circulated to staff and implemented by staff
- Nexus portal with all relevant policies