



POLICY	CHILD SAFETY AND WELLBEING POLICY
CONSULTATION	Consulted with School Council and Staff on August 2022
ENDORSED BY	School Council
ENDORSED ON	October 2022
NEXT REVIEW DATE	October 2024

POLICY

Blackburn English Language School’s (ELS) Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates its commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation and how it will meet its duties and obligations in the care of and responsibilities to children and young people.

The Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy articulates the school’s approach and culture to provide the highest level of protection for children and young people in its care and provides information and guidance on child safety within the school. The policy requires all staff and volunteers to commit to the active demonstration of a child safe culture.

The Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy references further school policies and documents, all of which contribute to an environment of child safety.

The school’s Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy has been developed, and is implemented, in the context of the New Arrivals Program, where children/young people and their families are newly arrived in Australia and require specific support to understand the culture of both the community and the school.

The school adopts an approach of cultural sensitivity when working with its ever-changing cohort and ensures opportunities for discussion are provided. Communication with children/young people and families is facilitated through first language where practical to ensure understanding and compliance.

The Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is communicated to students and parents and input/feedback is both actively sought and valued.

This Policy provides an overview of Blackburn ELS’s approach to implementing the child safety standards as specified by [Ministerial Order 1359](#).

SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, and contractors in the school environment, whether or not they work in direct contact with children or young people. This policy also applies to school council members where indicated.

This policy applies to the physical and online school environments used by students during school and outside of school hours, including other locations provided by for a student’s use (for example, a school excursion) and those provided through third-party providers.

This policy should be read together with our other child safety code of conduct and Child Safe Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy.

The following terms in this policy have specific definitions:

Child

Child means a child or young person who is under the age of 18 years.

This is the same meaning as in the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005.

Child abuse

Child abuse includes:

- any act committed against a child involving:
 - a sexual offence; or
 - grooming offences under section 49M(1) of the Crimes Act 1958; and
- the infliction, on a child, of:
 - physical violence; or
 - serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- the serious neglect of a child.

Child-connected work

Child-connected work means work authorised by the school, school council, or Secretary of the Department of Education and Training and performed by an adult in a school environment while children are present or reasonably expected to be present.

Child-related work

The Worker Screening Act 2020 defines ‘child-related work’ as work which usually involves (or is likely to involve) direct contact with a child

Child safety

Child safety encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

School environment

School environment means any physical or virtual place made available or authorised by the school for use by a child during or outside school hours, including:

- a campus of the school;
- online or virtual school environments made available for use by a child or student (including email, intranet systems, software applications, collaboration tools, and online services); and
- other locations provided by the school or through a third-party provider for a child or student to use (including, but not limited to, locations used for school camps, sporting events, excursions, competitions, approved homestay accommodations, and other school approved activities or events)

School staff

School staff means an individual working in a school environment who is:

- employed under Part 2.4 of the [Education and Training Reform Act 2006](#) in the Government teaching service;
- employed under Part 2.3 of the [Education and Training Reform Act 2006](#);
- directly engaged or employed by a school council; or
- a volunteer or a contracted service provider (whether or not a body corporate or any other person is an intermediary).

Student

Student means a person who is enrolled at or attends the school.

Volunteer

Volunteer means a person who performs work without remuneration or reward for the school.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

Blackburn ELS is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This is the primary focus of our care and decision-making.

The school's approach to creating and maintaining a child safe school environment is guided by our school philosophy and values. Our vision is "to provide opportunities that maximise students' English language learning and empower them to become confident and active participants in Australian society." We know that children and young people, particularly those new to the country, can struggle to achieve their personal best if they are not safe from abuse.

The school's values of 'future making', 'embracing diversity' and 'building communities' are demonstrated in teacher practice and learner behaviour.

Blackburn English Language School has no tolerance for child abuse and takes proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our school environments. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly. Blackburn ELS promotes positive relationships between students and adults, and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

The school is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and in which their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safety policy, procedures, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and young people, particularly Aboriginal 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.

Every person involved in Blackburn ELS has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make, promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety. This makes it more difficult for abuse to occur and remain hidden.

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

Child safety is everyone's responsibility. The school leadership team, school staff, volunteers and school have responsibilities to uphold

School leadership team

Our school leadership team (comprising of the principal, assistant principals, leading teachers and learning specialists) is responsible for creating and maintaining a strong child safe culture by ensuring that each person understands their role, responsibility and behaviour expected in protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect. This includes ensuring policies and practices are effectively development and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359.

The Principal, Assistant Principals and Student Wellbeing Coordinator at each campus are responsible for::

- ensuring effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes and practices are in place and followed,
- modelling a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing,
- enabling inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all children and young people, particularly Aboriginal 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, are considered,
- reinforcing high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students,

- promoting regular open discussions on child safety issues within the school community including at school leadership meetings, staff meetings and school council meetings,
- facilitating and encouraging 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,
- creating 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 or from making records of any allegation.

The Principal and Student Wellbeing Coordinator are the first point of contact for child safety concerns or queries and for coordinating response to child safety incidents.

- The Student Wellbeing Coordinator is responsible for monitoring the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Anyone in the school community should approach the Student Wellbeing Coordinator if they have any concerns about the school's compliance with the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.
- The Student Wellbeing Coordinator is responsible for informing the school community about this policy, and making it publicly available.

The school has also established a Child Safety and Wellbeing Team (comprised of the Principal, Assistant Principal(s), Student Wellbeing Coordinator and Mental Health Practitioner). The Child Safety and Wellbeing Team meet regularly to identify and respond to any ongoing matters related to child safety and wellbeing.

School staff and volunteers

All school staff and volunteers are responsible for:

- participating in child safety and wellbeing induction and training annually, either provided by the school or the Department of Education and Training, and always following the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures,
- acting in accordance with the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct and with their legal obligations, including:
 - Failure to disclose offence (applies to all adults),
 - Duty of care (applies to all school staff),
 - Mandatory reporting obligations (applies to all mandatory reporters, including teachers, principals, registered psychologists, and registered doctors and nurses),
 - Failure to protect offence (applies to a person in a position of authority within the school),
 - Reportable conduct obligations (applies to all school staff in reporting conduct to the principal, and applies to the principal in reporting to Employee Conduct Branch)
 - Organisational duty of care (applies to the school as an organisation),
- identifying and raising concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures, including following the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) where necessary,
- ensuring students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives,
- implementing inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

Staff who are Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) registered are **mandatory reporters**. School mandatory reporting staff are required to:

- Complete the "Protecting Children – Mandatory reporting and other obligations" online module every year.
- Read the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct on induction and maintain familiarity with that document.
- Read the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures on induction and maintain familiarity with that document.
- Read the school's Child Safety Policy (this document) on induction and maintain familiarity with that document.

School council

In performing the functions and powers given to them under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, school council members are responsible for:

- championing and promoting a child safe culture with the broader school community, including considering the diversity of all children and young people, particularly Aboriginal 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, asexual (LGBTQIA+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda at school council meetings,
- undertaking annual training on child safety,
- approving 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 council employees, ensuring that selection, supervision, and management practices are child safe.

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.

All child safety documents, including this policy, the Child Safety Code of Conduct, the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#) and the [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#) are readily available online and in hard copy on Compass for all staff to read at any time.

Managing risks to child safety and wellbeing

Blackburn ELS believes the wellbeing of children and young people is paramount and is vigilant in ensuring proper risk management processes. The school recognises there are potential risks to children and actively undertake preventative measures by identifying, assessing and managing risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online school environments. These risks are managed through our child safety wellbeing policies, procedures and practices, and in our activity specific risk registers, such as those we develop for excursions, camps and any other 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 school leadership team will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

Embedding a culture of child safety

To embed a culture of child safety and wellbeing at Blackburn ELS, 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 responsibilities. Our school is committed to supporting and encouraging students to use their voice to raise and share their concerns with a trusted adult at any time of need.

Student empowerment

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support in the school to ensure a sense of belonging through our student Code of Conduct and the explicit teaching of our school values; Building Communities, Future Making, Embracing Diversity.

We inform students of their rights and teach students 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 explicitly teach expected behaviours, healthy and respectful relationships, resilience, and child abuse awareness and prevention in class as part of our whole school approach to Respectful Relationships in the school curriculum and through age-appropriate discussions of child safety in student assemblies and student information sessions. We have an appointed Child Safety Officer at each of the Whitehorse, Maroondah and Wodonga campuses and we ensure our students know who to talk to if they are worried or feel unsafe and we encourage them to share concerns with a trusted adult at any time.

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, check our understanding of the complaint, support the student and keep them (and their parents and carers, as appropriate) informed about progress.

Family engagement

Our families and the school community also 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 Blackburn ELS 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 review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.

We help empower children, young people and families by:

- providing information sessions for families that address and explain information about child safety and the Child Safe Standards. This will be delivered and made available in first language wherever possible,
- ensuring our child safety policies and procedures are available for students and parents on our website,
- displaying PROTECT Child Safety posters across the school,

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.

Establishing a culturally safe environment

At Blackburn ELS, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture and the cultures of all our students, values and practices are respected. This includes recognising the link between culture, identity and safety, and actively creating opportunities for students from different cultural backgrounds and communities, including the Aboriginal culture and community, to have a voice and presence in our school planning, policies, and activities.

In order to further promote cultural safety in our school community, Blackburn ELS includes:

- the explicit teaching of Aboriginal Culture and Respectful Relationships as part of the school curriculum,
- the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags visually present and acknowledged in all classrooms,
- an Acknowledgement of Country at student assemblies and information sessions for students and families,
- the provision for staff to be inducted into Cultural Awareness Training delivered by the Department of Education and Training,
- connecting with our local Aboriginal Elders and community to participate in whole school activities such as a Welcome to Country during Harmony Day.

RECRUITMENT, TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

Blackburn ELS applies robust child safe recruitment, induction, training and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children and that everyone in the school understands that child safety is everyone's responsibility.

Our school culture aims for all staff and volunteers (in addition to parents/carers and children/young people) to feel confident and comfortable in coming forward with any allegations or suspicions of child abuse or child safety concerns. We train our staff and volunteers to identify, assess, and minimise risks of child abuse and to detect potential signs of child abuse. This training occurs annually, in accordance with Ministerial Order on Child Safe Standards.

Staff recruitment

When recruiting staff, we follow the Department of Education and Training's recruitment policies and guidelines, available on the Policy and Advisory Library (PAL) at:

- [Recruitment in Schools](#)
- [Suitability for Employment Checks](#)
- [School Council Employment](#)
- [Contractor OHS Management](#)

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

New employees and volunteers will be expected to participate in our child safety and wellbeing induction process. This process includes referral to:

- 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,

any other child safety and wellbeing information that school leadership considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

Ongoing training and education

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 record-keeping 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 needs or issues.

Ongoing supervision and management of staff

All staff engaged in child-connected work will be supervised appropriately to develop their skills to protect children and young people from abuse, to promote the cultural safety of those from linguistically and/or diverse backgrounds, international students and the safety of those with a disability or vulnerability.

All employees of our school will be monitored and assessed via regular performance review to ensure their continuing suitability for child-connected work. Any inappropriate behaviour will be reported by school staff to the principal or assistant principals and will be managed in accordance with Blackburn ELS's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures where required.

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

Suitability of volunteers

All prospective 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. They are required to maintain a valid Working with Children Check.

School council 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,
- Blackburn ELS child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes and practices.

REPORTING A CHILD SAFETY CONCERN OR COMPLAINT

Blackburn ELS 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 and responding to complaints and concerns in our school's Complaints policy.

The school has clear expectations for all staff and volunteers in making a report and responding to an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse. All staff (including school council employees and homestay providers) must follow the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures, including following the "Four Critical Actions for Schools". Immediate actions should include reporting their concerns to DHHS Child Protection, Victoria Police and/or another appropriate agency and notifying the principal or a member of the school leadership team of their concerns and the reasons for those concerns.

Blackburn ELS will never prohibit or discourage school staff from reporting an allegation of child abuse. The school will always take action to respond to a complaint in accordance with the school's Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures. Blackburn ELS will follow the [Four Critical Actions](#) for complaints and concerns relating to adult behaviour towards a child, and 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 of other harmful behaviours.

COMMUNICATIONS

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

- ensuring that the Child Safety Policy (this document), Code of Conduct, and the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedure are given to parents/carers at enrolment and available on our school website,
- displaying PROTECT posters around the school,
- updates in the school newsletter of our school's commitment to child safety.
- ensuring that child safety is a regular agenda item at school leadership meetings and staff meetings for discussion.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

This school collects, uses and discloses information about particular children, young people and their families in accordance with Victorian privacy law. The principles regulating the collection, use and storage of information is included in the Department of Education and Training's [Schools' Privacy Policy](#).

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

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

RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

This Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy is to be read in conjunction with other school policies, procedures, and codes. Related policies and documents, located on Compass, include:

- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Child Safe Code of Conduct

- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations (including Mandatory Reporting) Policy and Procedures
- Child Safety Risk Register
- Complaints Policy
- Digital Learning Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Visitors Policy
- Volunteers Policy

Related Department of Education and Training policies

- [Bullying Prevention and Response Policy](#)
- [Child and Family Violence Information Sharing Schemes](#)
- [Complaints Policy](#)
- [Contractor OHS Management Policy](#)
- [Digital Learning in Schools Policy](#)
- [Family Violence Support](#)
- [Protecting Children: Reporting Obligations Policy](#)
- [Policy and Guidelines for Recruitment in Schools](#)
- [Reportable Conduct Policy](#)
- [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#)
- [Supervision of Students Policy](#)
- [Visitors in Schools Policy](#)
- [Volunteers in Schools Policy](#)
- [Working with Children and other Suitability Checks for School Volunteers and Visitors](#)

Other related documents

- [Identifying and Responding to All Forms of Abuse in Victorian Schools](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools](#)
- [Identifying and Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending](#)
- [Recording your actions: Responding to suspected child abuse – A template for Victorian schools](#)

POLICY EVALUATION AND REVIEW

To ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement of our child safe policies, procedures and practices, this policy will be reviewed every two years. Part of the review will include analysing any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice, and acting with transparency and sharing pertinent learnings and reviewing outcomes with school staff and our school community.

Policy last reviewed	October 2022
Consultation	Consultation for this policy is mandatory
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	October 2024

ENDORSEMENT

This **Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy** was endorsed by the School Council of Blackburn ELS on Friday 7 October 2022.

Fiona Purcell

Fiona Purcell
School Council President

This Policy will be reviewed in October 2024.