BERMAGUI PRESCHOOL

4.18 Child Protection

This policy was approved by the Nominated Supervisor in consultation with staff and families.

Date Approved: October 2026 **Review Date:** October 2029

Aim

This policy is guided by the paramount consideration that children's safety, rights and best interests are upheld above all other considerations in all decisions, actions and practices.

Bermagui Preschool is committed to protecting children from harm and providing an environment where every child's safety, wellbeing, dignity and rights are respected.

Children have the right to feel safe, be protected from abuse, neglect and exploitation, and to participate in decisions that affect them. The safety, welfare and wellbeing of children is the primary consideration in all decisions and practices at Bermagui Preschool.

This policy outlines the responsibilities and procedures for preventing, identifying, responding to and reporting concerns relating to child protection.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- Approved Provider
- Management Committee members
- Nominated Supervisor
- Responsible Persons
- Educators
- Employees
- Casual staff
- Students
- Volunteers
- Contractors
- Visitors
- Families and children where relevant

All adults involved with Bermagui Preschool share responsibility for creating a child safe environment.

Policy Statement

Bermagui Preschool is committed to:

- providing a child safe environment where children are protected from harm;
- promoting children's rights, participation and voice;
- recognising and responding to indicators of abuse, neglect and harm;
- ensuring all mandatory reporters understand and meet their legal responsibilities;
- ensuring all staff, students and volunteers understand appropriate professional behaviour;
- responding promptly and appropriately to concerns, disclosures and allegations;
- maintaining confidentiality and protecting the privacy of children and families;
- supporting children and families through respectful, trauma-informed practices.

The interests of the child are paramount in all child protection matters.

Child Safe Culture at Bermagui Preschool

Bermagui Preschool is committed to embedding the NSW Child Safe Standards into everyday practice. Our child safe culture is supported by:

Children's participation

Children are encouraged to:

- express their views and feelings;
- contribute to decisions affecting them;
- communicate concerns or worries;
- feel confident that adults will listen and respond.

Educators support children through respectful relationships, play-based learning and responsive interactions.

Respectful relationships

Educators build trusting relationships with children by:

- listening to children;
- valuing children's ideas and perspectives;
- supporting children's emotional wellbeing;
- recognising individual strengths, abilities, cultures and identities.

Inclusion and equity

Bermagui Preschool recognises that every child has different needs and experiences.
We are committed to ensuring:

- children feel welcomed and valued;
- children with additional needs receive appropriate support;
- cultural safety is promoted;
- diversity is respected.

Child Safe Standards Alignment

Bermagui Preschool's practices reflect the NSW Child Safe Standards:

Child Safe Standard	Bermagui Preschool Commitment
Standard 1: Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership	Child safety is a shared responsibility supported by management and educators.
Standard 2: Children participate in decisions affecting them	Children's voices are encouraged and respected.
Standard 3: Families and communities are informed and involved	Families are welcomed as partners in children's safety and wellbeing.
Standard 4: Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected	Inclusive practices support all children.
Standard 5: People working with children are suitable and supported	Recruitment, screening and training requirements are maintained.
Standard 6: Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused	Concerns are taken seriously and responded to promptly.
Standard 7: Staff are equipped with knowledge and skills	Educators receive child protection information and training.
Standard 8: Physical and online environments promote safety	Risks are identified and managed.
Standard 9: Implementation of Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed	Policies and practices are regularly reviewed.
Standard 10: Policies and procedures document child safety responsibilities	Child protection procedures are clearly documented and communicated.

Legislative And Quality Framework

Bermagui Preschool operates in accordance with:

- **Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010**
- **Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011**
- **Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)**
- **Child Protection (Working With Children) Act 2012 (NSW)**
- **Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)**
- **National Quality Standard**
    - Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety
    - Quality Area 5: Relationships with Children
    - Quality Area 6: Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities
    - Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership

Responsibilities

Approved Provider

The Approved Provider will:

- ensure child protection policies and procedures are implemented;
- ensure educators meet legislative requirements;
- provide resources, training and support;
- ensure Working with Children Checks are completed where required;
- ensure concerns and allegations are appropriately managed;
- maintain confidentiality and secure records;
- ensure continuous improvement of child safety practices.

Nominated Supervisor

The Nominated Supervisor will:

- promote a child safe culture;
- ensure educators understand mandatory reporting obligations;
- support staff who identify child protection concerns;
- ensure appropriate documentation is completed;
- ensure reports are made to relevant authorities when required;
- respond appropriately to allegations against staff, volunteers or students.

Educators and Staff

Educators will:

- maintain professional boundaries;
- develop respectful relationships with children;
- recognise indicators of abuse and neglect;
- document concerns accurately;
- report concerns where required;
- respond appropriately to disclosures;
- maintain confidentiality;
- follow this policy and related procedures.

Child Safe Recruitment, Screening And Induction

Bermagui Preschool is committed to ensuring that all people working with children are suitable, supported and understand their responsibilities for child safety.

Before commencing work or volunteering at Bermagui Preschool, all relevant adults must:

- hold a current **Working With Children Check (WWCC)** where required;
- provide evidence of required clearances before commencing duties;
- complete required employment and suitability checks;
- participate in an induction process;
- read and acknowledge understanding of relevant policies and procedures;
- understand their responsibilities as a mandatory reporter;
- understand professional boundaries and expected conduct.

The Approved Provider and Nominated Supervisor will ensure:

- WWCC details are verified and recorded;
- staff files contain required documentation;
- educators receive child protection information during induction;
- ongoing professional development is provided.

Students and volunteers must:

- complete an induction before participating in the service;
- understand their role and limitations;
- always work under the direction and supervision of educators;
- follow Bermagui Preschool policies and procedures.

Recognising Child Abuse, Neglect and Risk of Harm

Educators at Bermagui Preschool understand that children may experience harm through:

- physical abuse;
- sexual abuse;
- emotional or psychological abuse;
- neglect;
- exposure to domestic and family violence;
- unsafe environments;
- inappropriate behaviour by adults or other children.

Educators do not need proof that abuse or neglect has occurred before raising a concern. A report may be made when there are **reasonable grounds to suspect a child is at risk of significant harm**.

Indicators of concern may include:

Area of Concern	Possible Indicators
Physical abuse	Unexplained injuries, bruising, burns, fractures, fear of certain adults, injuries inconsistent with explanations
Sexual abuse	Disclosure of sexual behaviour or experiences, sexualised behaviour inappropriate for age, distress around particular people
Emotional abuse	Withdrawal, extreme anxiety, low self-esteem, fearfulness, ongoing humiliation or rejection
Neglect	Poor hygiene, inadequate clothing, lack of food, unmet medical needs, unsafe living conditions
Domestic and family violence	Fear, anxiety, changes in behaviour, exposure to violence or threats
Behavioural concerns	Significant changes in behaviour, regression, distress, aggression or withdrawal

Educators will remain alert to changes in children's behaviour, presentation and wellbeing and will respond respectfully and promptly.

Child Protection Mandatory Reporting Procedure

All educators working at Bermagui Preschool are required to understand their obligations as mandatory reporters under NSW child protection legislation. A mandatory report must be made when a person has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child or young person is at **risk of significant harm (ROSH)**.

1. **Concern arises about a child**
   - Suspected of disclosed abuse/neglect (physical, emotional, sexual, or neglect).
   - Any concern, no matter how small, should be documented, and assessed.

2. **Is the child in immediate danger?**
   - **Yes** → ensure safety immediately (call **000** if urgent)
   - Take any steps necessary to **remove the child from harm.**
   - **No** → continue to next step

3. **Document Observations**
   - Record **facts only,** including date, time and people involved
   - Include **observations of behaviour, disclosures, or injuries.**
   - **Do not investigate or ask leading questions** – avoid speculation.

4. **Assess Risk of Significant Harm (ROSH)**
   - Use the **Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG)** to assess the level of risk.
   - The MRG will guide whether to **report immediately** or **monitor and follow up.**
   - Document the **MRG outcome and rationale.**
   - Consider:
     - The child's **vulnerability** and age.
     - **Pattern or severity** of concern.
     - **Family or environmental factors** that may increase risk.

5. **Mandatory Report Required?**
   - **Yes** → contact the **Child Protection Helpline 132 111.**
   - Provide clear, factual information.
   - **No** → continue monitoring, follow internal procedures, and support the child.

6. **Notify Nominated Supervisor**
   - Inform **Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor** of the concern and actions taken.
   - Share only **relevant information** with staff who need to know.

7. **Support and Monitor the Child**
   - Ensure the child is **kept safe and supported.**
   - Maintain **confidentiality** at all times.
   - Continue to **monitor for changes in behaviour or wellbeing.**

8. **Document and Follow Up**
   - Record all actions, contacts, and follow-up steps.
   - Maintain **secure records** in accordance with policies and regulations.
   - Review and **update policies and procedures** as needed.
   - Consider **referral to support services** if appropriate.

Making a report is an act of protecting children and meeting professional responsibilities.

Responding To A Child Disclosure

Children may disclose information about abuse, neglect or unsafe situations in different ways. Educators must respond calmly, respectfully and supportively.

Educators will:

- listen carefully;
- remain calm;
- reassure the child that they have done the right thing by speaking;
- acknowledge the child's feelings;
- record the child's words accurately;
- report the concern according to this policy.

Appropriate responses may include:
"Thank you for telling me."
"I'm glad you told me."
"I will need to tell someone who can help keep you safe."

Educators will not:

- ask leading questions;
- investigate the allegation;
- pressure the child for more information;
- make promises of secrecy;
- confront the person alleged to have caused harm.

The role of educators is to support the child and report concerns, not investigate.

Allegations Against Educators, Staff, Volunteers Or Students

Bermagui Preschool takes all allegations of inappropriate behaviour, misconduct or harm towards children seriously.

Any allegation involving a staff member, volunteer, student or other adult will be managed with:

- fairness;
- confidentiality;
- procedural fairness;
- child safety as the priority.

Concerns may involve:

- child abuse;
- inappropriate behaviour;
- breaches of professional boundaries;
- conduct that may constitute reportable conduct.

Immediate response

The Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor will:

- ensure the child's immediate safety;
- document the allegation;
- assess whether a mandatory report is required;
- seek advice where necessary;
- manage risks while ensuring fairness for all parties.

Reportable Conduct

Where an allegation may constitute reportable conduct, Bermagui Preschool will follow the requirements of the **Office of the Children's Guardian – Reportable Conduct Scheme**

The service will:

- notify relevant authorities within required timeframes;
- conduct or participate in appropriate investigations;
- maintain confidentiality;
- keep accurate records;
- provide procedural fairness to the person involved.

Confidentiality And Information Sharing

Bermagui Preschool recognises that confidentiality is essential when responding to child protection concerns. Information relating to children, families, staff and child protection matters will only be shared with people who:

- need the information to fulfil their responsibilities;
- are authorised by legislation;
- are involved in supporting the safety and wellbeing of the child.

Educators must maintain confidentiality and ensure information is not discussed:

- with other families;
- with unauthorised staff members;
- outside the service;
- through personal social media or electronic communication.

Confidentiality does not prevent a mandatory reporter from sharing information required to protect a child. Where a report is made to child protection authorities, information may be shared as required under NSW child protection legislation.

Documentation And Record Keeping

Accurate documentation supports children's safety and ensures accountability.

Bermagui Preschool will maintain records relating to:

- child protection concerns;
- mandatory reports;
- disclosures;
- allegations against staff, volunteers or students;
- risk assessments;
- notifications to authorities;
- actions taken and follow-up.

Records will:

- be factual and objective;
- include dates, times and relevant details;
- be stored securely;
- only be accessed by authorised persons;
- be retained in accordance with legislative requirements.

Educators must not alter records after an incident has been documented. If additional information becomes available, it should be recorded as a separate entry.

Supporting Children And Families

Bermagui Preschool recognises that children and families may experience circumstances that impact their wellbeing.

Educators will provide support through:

- respectful and trusting relationships;
- predictable routines and emotional support;
- consultation with families where appropriate;
- referrals to appropriate support services;
- trauma-informed practices.

Where a child experiences trauma, educators will focus on:

- emotional safety;
- maintaining connection and trust;
- supporting the child's sense of belonging;
- responding to individual needs.

Where appropriate, families may be supported to access community services and professional assistance.

Professional Conduct And Boundaries

All adults at Bermagui Preschool are expected to model safe, respectful and professional behaviour.

Staff will:

- treat children with dignity and respect;
- maintain appropriate physical and emotional boundaries;
- use positive guidance strategies;
- communicate respectfully with children and families;
- follow the Bermagui Preschool Code of Conduct.

Staff must not:

- engage in inappropriate physical contact;
- use threatening, humiliating or degrading language;
- develop inappropriate personal relationships with children;
- communicate with children through personal social media accounts;
- use photographs or information about children without appropriate authorisation.

Professional behaviour supports children's safety and wellbeing.

Staff must maintain professional boundaries with children and families both within and outside the Preschool environment. Private babysitting or child-minding arrangements with families of children enrolled at Bermagui Preschool are strongly discouraged due to the potential for conflicts of interest and blurred professional boundaries. Staff must refer to the 1.15 Staff Babysitting and Professional Boundaries Policy for further guidance regarding these arrangements.

Children's Rights and Participation

Bermagui Preschool recognises children as capable and active participants in their own lives.

Children are encouraged to:

- express their thoughts and feelings;
- make choices appropriate to their age and development;
- contribute ideas about their learning environment;
- seek help when they feel unsafe.

Educators will create environments where children:

- feel listened to;
- know that concerns will be taken seriously;
- understand that adults are available to help.

Complaints And Concerns

Bermagui Preschool welcomes feedback and responds respectfully to concerns.

Children, families, staff and community members may raise concerns about:

- child safety;
- educator conduct;
- service practices;
- breaches of policy.

All concerns will be:

- taken seriously;
- responded to promptly;
- managed fairly;
- documented appropriately;
- reviewed to support continuous improvement.

Where concerns relate to child protection, mandatory reporting requirements will be followed.

Refer to the **Complaints and Grievances Policy**

Educator Training and Continuous Improvement

Bermagui Preschool is committed to ensuring educators have the knowledge and skills required to protect children.

Training and professional learning may include:

- mandatory reporting responsibilities;
- recognising indicators of abuse and neglect;
- responding to disclosures;
- child safe practices;
- professional boundaries;
- trauma-informed approaches;
- online safety.

Educators are expected to:

- participate in training;
- remain familiar with current procedures;
- seek guidance when unsure;
- contribute to ongoing policy improvement.

Mandatory Reporting Quick Reference Guide

If you are concerned about a child:

1. Notice - A concern, disclosure or change in behaviour is identified.

2. Ensure Safety - If immediate danger exists, contact **000.**

3. Record - Document factual observations and information received.

4. Assess - Use the NSW Mandatory Reporter Guide.

5. Report - If required **Child Protection Helpline 132 111**

6. Inform and Support - Notify the Nominated Supervisor and continue supporting the child.

Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Paramountcy in Child Safe Practice Policy
- Safe and Responsible Use of Digital Devices and Technologies Policy
- Photography, Social Media and Online Safety Policy
- Code of Conduct Policy
- Students, Volunteers, Visitors and Work Experience Policy
- Staff Employment Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Notification to the Regulatory Authority Policy
- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Interaction with Children, Families and Staff Policy
- Interactions with Children Policy
- Supporting Behaviour Regulation Policy
- Supervision Policy
- Incident, Injury and Trauma Policy
- Emergency Procedures (Evacuation and Lockdown) Policy
- Workplace Health and Safety Policy
- Feedback, Grievances and Complaints Policy
- Record Keeping and Retention of Records Policy
- Staff Babysitting and Professional Boundaries Policy

References And Legislation

Bermagui Preschool's Child Protection Policy is guided by:

Legislation

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)
- Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)

Frameworks and Standards

- National Quality Standard
- Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia Version 2.0
- NSW Child Safe Standards
- Office of the Children's Guardian – Reportable Conduct Scheme
- NSW Mandatory Reporter Guide

Policy Review and Approval

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it reflects:

- legislative changes;
- current child protection practices;
- feedback from educators, families and the community;
- continuous improvement priorities.

The review process will consider:

- effectiveness of procedures;
- educator understanding;
- training needs;
- changes to regulatory requirements.

Version History

V1.0 – First published: Pre-2026
V2.0 – March 2026: Comprehensive review and update of the Child Protection Policy
V2.1 – July 2026: Updated to reflect the paramountcy consideration
V2.2 – October 2026: Updated to reference the 1.15 Staff Babysitting and Professional Boundaries Policy