

Child Safety & Wellbeing Policies and Procedures Manual

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1. OUR COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

1.1 Purpose and Values

Stage Sparks Academy is dedicated to providing an environment where children are protected, supported and encouraged to explore their creativity through the performing arts. Every child in our care has the right to feel safe, respected and valued at all times.

Our programs are built on the belief that learning and creativity flourish best when children feel secure, listened to and confident in their surroundings. Safeguarding children is embedded into every aspect of our operations, from staffing and program design to daily supervision and communication with families.

Child safety is not treated as a standalone responsibility. It is a core part of how we operate as an organisation.

1.2 Guiding Principles

Our approach to protecting children is guided by the following principles:

Child wellbeing comes first

The physical, emotional and social welfare of children always takes priority over operational or performance outcomes. All decisions are made with the best interests of the child in mind.

Prevention over reaction

We actively identify and reduce risks before they become issues. This includes careful planning, staff training and regular review of practices.

Respect and inclusion

Every child is treated with dignity and fairness, regardless of background, ability, identity or circumstance. Diversity is welcomed and celebrated.

Accountability and openness

We promote transparent practices and clear responsibilities. Concerns are taken seriously and addressed promptly.

Professional integrity

All staff are expected to act ethically, responsibly and in accordance with this manual and applicable legislation.

1.3 Scope of This Manual

This document applies to all individuals involved in Stage Sparks Academy programs, including employees, contractors, volunteers and visiting artists.

It sets out how we ensure child safety and wellbeing through consistent standards and clear procedures. All team members must familiarise themselves with the content and follow these requirements while working with Stage Sparks Academy.

This manual is reviewed annually or sooner if legislative or operational changes require updates.

2. EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

2.1 Key Contacts

The following contact information must be accessible at all times during programs:

Emergency Services

Phone: 000

For situations involving immediate danger, injury or serious risk

Stage Sparks Academy Director

Phone: 0403 453 077

Mitchell Smith

Stage Sparks Academy Office

Phone: 0403 453 077

Email: hello@stagesparksacademy.com.au

Available during standard business hours

Venue Emergency Contacts

Each venue will provide specific emergency contacts prior to program commencement. These must be documented and communicated to staff.

2.2 Emergency Communication Process

In the event of an emergency:

Assess the situation and ensure immediate safety

Contact emergency services if required

Inform the Director as soon as practicable

Once safe, notify parents or carers

Complete all required documentation following the incident

Clear, calm and timely communication is essential to ensure effective responses and family confidence.

3. FACILITATOR RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

3.1 Staff Selection

Stage Sparks Academy employs a careful and thorough process when selecting staff and volunteers. We seek individuals who demonstrate both professional competence and a genuine commitment to working safely with children.

All applicants must provide:

- A written application outlining relevant experience
- A current résumé
- Verified qualifications or experience in performing arts, education or youth engagement
- Contact details for at least two professional referees

Applicants are assessed based on:

- Suitability for working with children
- Communication and interpersonal skills
- Ability to manage groups safely and positively
- Alignment with Stage Sparks Academy values

3.2 Interview and Assessment

Shortlisted applicants will participate in:

- A structured interview addressing child safety awareness, teaching approach and behaviour management
- Scenario discussions to assess judgement and decision-making
- A practical teaching demonstration where applicable

Referees are contacted and asked specifically about the applicant's conduct, professionalism and suitability for working with children.

3.3 Working With Children and Police Checks

No person may commence work with Stage Sparks Academy without valid child-related clearances.

All staff and volunteers must hold:

- A current Working With Children Check relevant to their state or territory
- Any additional police or regulatory checks required by law

Management is responsible for:

- Verifying clearance details prior to commencement
- Maintaining a secure register of expiry dates
- Ensuring renewals are completed on time
- Standing down any individual whose clearance lapses

3.4 Induction and Ongoing Development

All new staff complete a structured induction covering:

- Child safety responsibilities and legal obligations
- This manual and all related procedures
- Emergency and medical response processes
- Professional conduct expectations
- Communication protocols with children and families

Ongoing professional learning includes:

- Annual child safety refreshers
- First aid and emergency training
- Regular policy updates
- Peer mentoring and performance feedback

Staff are encouraged to actively contribute to improving safety practices through reflection and shared learning.

4. CODE OF CONDUCT

4.1 Purpose

The Code of Conduct outlines the expected standards of behaviour for all individuals working with or on behalf of Stage Sparks Academy. It exists to protect children, guide staff actions and uphold the professional integrity of the organisation.

All staff, contractors and volunteers must comply with this Code at all times while engaged in Stage Sparks Academy activities.

4.2 Professional Behaviour

All adults working with children must:

- Treat every child with respect, patience and fairness
- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries
- Act as positive role models at all times
- Follow all organisational policies and procedures

Use appropriate language and behaviour suited to a child-centred environment
Comply with all legal obligations relating to child safety

Staff are expected to behave in a manner that fosters trust and safety and avoids any conduct that could reasonably be interpreted as inappropriate or harmful.

4.3 Appropriate Interactions with Children

Staff must:

- Use encouraging and constructive communication
- Ensure physical contact is appropriate, non-intrusive and related to safety or instruction only
- Seek consent where practical and explain the reason for physical contact
- Respect personal space and individual comfort levels
- Support children's autonomy and dignity

Staff must not:

- Engage in rough play, unnecessary physical contact or invasive behaviour
- Use humiliating, intimidating or aggressive language
- Make discriminatory or derogatory comments
- Engage in private, unsupervised situations with a child without clear justification
- Communicate with children via private social media or personal messaging platforms

4.4 Use of Digital Communication and Media

Digital communication with children must:

- Be transparent and appropriate
- Occur via approved platforms where possible
- Include parents or carers when relevant
- Be related directly to program delivery

Staff must not:

- Send personal messages unrelated to program activities
- Share images of children without parental consent
- Post identifiable images or information without authorisation

4.5 Breaches of the Code

Any breach of this Code of Conduct will be taken seriously and may result in:

- Retraining or formal warning
- Suspension of duties
- Termination of engagement
- Referral to external authorities if required

All staff are required to report observed or suspected breaches promptly.

5. PHYSICAL SAFETY PROCEDURES

5.1 Safe Learning Environments

Stage Sparks Academy is committed to maintaining venues that are safe, clean and suitable for children.

This includes:

- Ensuring floors, furniture and equipment are free from hazards
- Providing adequate lighting, ventilation and access to water
- Clearly marking emergency exits and procedures
- Securing restricted or staff-only areas
- Conducting daily safety checks of all spaces used

Any identified hazards must be reported immediately and addressed before children access the area.

5.2 Supervision Standards

Children must be supervised at all times while in our care.

Supervision includes:

- Maintaining appropriate staff-to-child ratios
- Ensuring staff are positioned to observe all participants
- Never leaving groups unattended
- Conducting regular headcounts
- Ensuring transitions between activities are monitored

Children are not permitted to leave a session or venue without authorisation and documented parent or carer approval.

5.3 Arrival and Collection of Children

Procedures include:

- Sign-in and sign-out processes for all children
- Verification of authorised pick-up persons
- Clear communication regarding late arrivals or early departures
- Supervision of waiting areas during drop-off and collection

Staff must ensure no child is released to an unauthorised person.

5.4 Equipment and Props

All equipment and props used in sessions must:

- Be age-appropriate and in good condition
- Be checked prior to use
- Be stored safely when not in use
- Be used only under staff supervision

Children must receive clear instructions on safe use before engaging with equipment.

5.5 Off-Site Activities and Performances

For excursions or external performances:

- Risk assessments must be completed in advance
- Parents must be informed and provide consent
- Adequate supervision and transport arrangements must be confirmed
- Emergency contacts and medical information must accompany staff

6. EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING

6.1 Creating a Supportive Culture

Stage Sparks Academy actively promotes an environment where children feel emotionally safe, valued and encouraged.

This includes:

- Welcoming and inclusive behaviour
- Celebrating effort as well as achievement
- Encouraging positive peer relationships
- Recognising individual strengths and differences
- Responding compassionately to distress or anxiety

6.2 Respectful Communication

Staff are expected to:

- Speak to children in a calm, respectful and supportive manner
- Listen attentively to children's concerns or ideas
- Avoid sarcasm, ridicule or dismissive behaviour
- Encourage open communication and self-expression

Children should feel comfortable raising concerns without fear of negative consequences.

6.3 Supporting Children Experiencing Distress

If a child appears upset, anxious or withdrawn, staff should:

- Respond promptly and sensitively
- Offer reassurance and practical support
- Provide a quiet space if needed
- Seek assistance from senior staff where appropriate
- Communicate with parents or carers if concerns persist

All responses should prioritise the child's dignity and emotional safety.

6.4 Promoting Positive Behaviour

Positive behaviour is encouraged through:

- Clear expectations
- Consistent routines
- Positive reinforcement
- Opportunities for leadership and responsibility
- Teaching conflict resolution skills

Behaviour management strategies are addressed further in Section 7.

6.5 Bullying and Harassment

Stage Sparks Academy does not tolerate bullying, harassment or exclusionary behaviour.

This includes:

- Verbal, physical or social bullying
- Cyberbullying
- Discrimination based on personal characteristics

All incidents must be addressed promptly and documented in line with incident reporting procedures.

7. BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT PROTOCOL

7.1 Purpose

Stage Sparks Academy promotes a positive, respectful and safe learning environment where children are supported to make good choices and develop self-discipline. Behaviour management is based on guidance, encouragement and consistency rather than punishment.

Our approach prioritises teaching appropriate behaviour while maintaining the dignity and wellbeing of every child.

7.2 Behaviour Expectations

Children are expected to:

- Treat others with kindness and respect
- Follow reasonable instructions from staff
- Participate safely in activities
- Care for equipment and shared spaces
- Take responsibility for their actions

Staff model these behaviours at all times.

7.3 Positive Behaviour Strategies

Staff use the following strategies to encourage positive behaviour:

- Clear and age-appropriate expectations
- Consistent routines
- Praise and recognition of positive choices
- Opportunities for leadership and contribution
- Redirection rather than confrontation
- Private conversations where correction is needed

7.4 Managing Challenging Behaviour

When behaviour becomes unsafe or disruptive, staff should:

- Remain calm and composed
- Address the behaviour promptly and respectfully
- Explain why the behaviour is inappropriate
- Redirect the child to appropriate behaviour
- Offer choices where possible
- Involve senior staff if concerns persist

Children should never be shamed, threatened or physically punished.

7.5 Escalation and Support

If challenging behaviour continues:

Parents or carers will be informed

A behaviour support plan may be developed

Additional supervision or adjustments may be implemented

External support may be recommended if appropriate

Any serious or repeated incidents must be documented.

7.6 Exclusion from Activities

Temporary removal from an activity may occur if a child's behaviour poses a risk to themselves or others. This will:

Be used as a last resort

Be supervised at all times

Be communicated to parents

Never involve isolation without oversight

8. MEDICAL AND HEALTH MANAGEMENT

8.1 Collection of Health Information

Prior to program commencement, parents or carers must provide:

Relevant medical conditions

Allergies and intolerances

Medication requirements

Emergency contact details

This information is handled confidentially and shared only with staff who need to know.

8.2 Medication Administration

Where medication is required:

Parents must provide written consent and instructions

Medication must be clearly labelled

Staff must record administration times and doses

Medication must be stored securely

Staff are not permitted to administer medication without proper authorisation.

8.3 Managing Illness and Injury

If a child becomes unwell or injured:

- First aid is provided by trained staff
- The child is monitored and comforted
- Parents or carers are notified promptly
- Emergency services are contacted if required
- An incident report is completed

Children with contagious illnesses should not attend programs.

8.4 Hygiene and Infection Control

Stage Sparks Academy promotes good hygiene through:

- Regular hand washing
- Cleaning of shared equipment
- Encouraging respiratory etiquette
- Maintaining clean and sanitary facilities

Staff model and reinforce these practices daily.

8.5 Special Health Needs

Where children have specific health or support needs, Stage Sparks Academy will:

- Work collaboratively with families
- Make reasonable adjustments
- Ensure staff are briefed and prepared
- Review plans regularly

9. EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROCEDURES

9.1 Emergency Preparedness

Stage Sparks Academy maintains readiness for emergencies through:

- Staff training in emergency response
- Clear evacuation and lockdown procedures
- Accessible emergency contact information
- Regular review of procedures

Emergency procedures are communicated to staff and, where appropriate, to children in age-appropriate ways.

9.2 Types of Emergencies

Emergencies may include:

- Medical emergencies
- Fire or evacuation
- Severe weather
- Lockdown situations
- Missing child
- External threats

Each venue may have specific procedures that must also be followed.

9.3 Response Protocol

In any emergency, staff must:

- Remain calm
- Ensure immediate safety of all children
- Follow venue and organisational procedures
- Contact emergency services if required
- Notify the Director as soon as practicable
- Account for all children

Children must never be left unattended during an emergency.

9.4 Communication During Emergencies

Communication will:

- Be clear and timely
- Prioritise child safety
- Be coordinated through the Director or delegated senior staff
- Ensure parents or carers are informed once safe

Staff must not share unverified information.

9.5 Post-Emergency Actions

Following any emergency:

- A debrief will occur
- An incident report will be completed
- Procedures will be reviewed
- Support will be provided to staff and children as needed.

10. CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING

10.1 Commitment to Safeguarding

Stage Sparks Academy is committed to protecting children from all forms of abuse, neglect and harm. Safeguarding is a shared responsibility and is embedded across all programs, policies and practices.

All staff, contractors and volunteers are required to act in the best interests of children at all times and to take action if concerns arise.

10.2 Understanding Harm and Abuse

Harm may include, but is not limited to:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Sexual abuse or exploitation
- Neglect
- Exposure to family violence
- Inappropriate or exploitative relationships

Staff are trained to recognise indicators of abuse and to respond appropriately.

10.3 Recognising Indicators of Risk

Signs that may raise concern include:

- Unexplained injuries
- Changes in behaviour or mood
- Withdrawal or fearfulness
- Sexualised behaviour that is not age appropriate
- Reluctance to go home or attend activities
- Disclosures by a child

These signs do not automatically confirm abuse but must be taken seriously.

10.4 Responding to Concerns

If a staff member has a concern about a child's safety, they must:

- Ensure the child is safe
- Remain calm and supportive
- Listen without leading or interrogating
- Avoid making promises they cannot keep

Record concerns accurately and promptly
Report the matter to the Director or designated Child Safety Officer

10.5 Mandatory Reporting

Staff must comply with mandatory reporting obligations under relevant state or territory legislation.

Where required, reports must be made to:

Child Protection authorities
Police
Or other relevant agencies

Stage Sparks Academy supports staff in fulfilling their legal obligations and will not penalise staff for making reports in good faith.

10.6 Confidentiality

All information relating to child protection matters must be treated with strict confidentiality and shared only with those who are legally entitled to receive it.

11. INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

11.1 Our Commitment to Inclusion

Stage Sparks Academy is committed to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment where every child feels respected, supported and able to participate fully.

We value diversity and actively work to ensure that all children have equitable access to our programs.

11.2 Respecting Differences

We recognise and respect diversity in:

Culture and language
Ability and disability
Gender identity and expression
Family background
Socioeconomic circumstances
Learning styles

Staff are expected to respond to differences with sensitivity, fairness and professionalism.

11.3 Supporting Children with Additional Needs

Where children require additional support, Stage Sparks Academy will:

- Work collaboratively with families
- Make reasonable adjustments
- Adapt activities and learning approaches
- Provide staff with appropriate information and training
- Review supports regularly

No child will be excluded due to disability or support needs where reasonable adjustments can be made.

11.4 Cultural Safety

We are committed to providing culturally safe environments, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

This includes:

- Respecting cultural identity
- Valuing cultural knowledge and practices
- Addressing bias and discrimination
- Ensuring participation without fear of exclusion or misunderstanding

11.5 Anti-Discrimination

Discrimination, harassment or exclusion based on personal characteristics is not tolerated and will be addressed promptly.

12. INCIDENT REPORTING AND DOCUMENTATION

12.1 Purpose

Accurate reporting and documentation are essential to maintaining child safety, accountability and continuous improvement.

All incidents, injuries, near misses and concerns must be recorded in line with this section.

12.2 What Must Be Reported

The following must be documented:

- Injuries or medical incidents
- Behavioural incidents
- Child safety concerns
- Near misses or hazards
- Breaches of policy
- Complaints

12.3 How to Report

Staff must:

- Complete the appropriate incident report form
- Include factual, objective information
- Avoid assumptions or personal opinions
- Submit reports to the Director promptly

Serious incidents must be reported immediately.

12.4 Record Management

All records are:

- Stored securely
- Accessed only by authorised personnel
- Maintained in accordance with privacy legislation
- Retained for required legal timeframes

12.5 Reviewing Incidents

Reported incidents are reviewed to:

- Identify patterns or risks
- Improve procedures
- Inform training needs
- Strengthen child safety practices