

# STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY



## Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact Warragul & District Specialist School on 56231385.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all students and members of our school community understand:

- (a) our commitment to providing a safe and supportive learning environment for students
- (b) expectations for positive student behaviour
- (c) support available to students and families
- (d) our school's policies and procedures for responding to inappropriate student behaviour.

Warragul & District Specialist School is committed to providing a safe, secure and stimulating learning environment for all students. We understand that students reach their full potential only when they are happy, healthy and safe, and that a positive school culture where student participation is encouraged and valued, helps to engage students and support them in their learning. Our school acknowledges that student wellbeing and student learning outcomes are closely linked.

The objective of this policy is to support our school to create and maintain a safe, supportive and inclusive school environment consistent with our school's values.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions.

## CONTENTS

1. School profile
2. School values, philosophy and vision
3. Engagement strategies
4. Identifying students in need of support
5. Student rights and responsibilities
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## POLICY

### 1. School profile

Warragul and District Specialist School is a steadily growing school with a student population of 120 in 2022. Students are aged between 5-18 years. The eligibility criteria require students to have a mild, moderate or severe intellectual disability. Many students have a dual disability, such as autism, physical impairment, behavioural issues, communication difficulties or sensory impairment. All students are on the Program for Students with a Disability (PSD).

The school is situated in the rural town of Warragul, 104km east south-east of Melbourne. Students travel to the school from a broad geographic area, including Drouin, Neerim District, Yannathan/Poowong area and Trafalgar areas. The school was originally established in 1959 as Mawarra Day Training Centre. In February 1990, the school section of Mawarra was transferred to the Department of School Education and catered for students with a moderate intellectual disability. The school became a dual mode facility in January 1999, providing educational programs for students with a mild intellectual disability as well as those with more profound disabilities. In response to increasing enrolments, a new school was purpose-built adjacent to the Warragul Regional College in 2005. This school was designed for 60 students. More buildings have had to be sourced as well as built to cater for the increasing school population.

The school maintains a strong focus on the individual child. Individual Learning Plans, that include goals in academic as well as personal and social learning areas, are developed for every student. Classroom programs are designed to support the achievement of these goals. Specialised teachers, Allied Health Specialists and Education Support Officers, work together to help students achieve their individual goals.

Our School offers a wide range of educational programs and students have the opportunity to participate in a variety of programs across Junior, Middle and even more extensively when in Senior School.

Warragul & District Specialist School's encourages use of the school as a resource for other school and the wider community. Regular student placements include special education teachers, speech pathology students, TAFE and work experience students, and others, developing their awareness and understanding of students with a disability.

### 2. School values, philosophy and vision

Warragul & District Specialist School's Statement of Values and School Philosophy is integral to the work that we do and is the foundation of our school community. Students, staff and members of our school community are encouraged to live and demonstrate our core values of Being Safe, Respectful Learners at every opportunity.

#### SCHOOL VISION

Warragul and District Specialist School is committed to educating students with special needs within the Baw Baw Shire. We aim to provide an innovative, caring, and stimulating environment where learning is relevant and purposeful and where students develop a sense of belonging through

mutual respect and cooperation.

*We believe that all students can and will learn, and grow in self-esteem, through fostering a climate of care, dignity and respect, using consistent behaviour management strategies, deliberate positive reinforcement, and recognition of achievement.*

*We promote a curriculum that develops skills that its graduates will utilize as adults. We believe that graduates should be actively involved in work/further education, participate in managing their own homes, and are active participants in their own local community.*

### SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

To Learn in a Safe and Respectful environment that celebrates difference. Our goal is to maximise individual academic and social growth.

### SCHOOL MOTTO

Celebrating Difference

## 3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies

Warragul & District Specialist School has developed a range of strategies to promote engagement, an inclusive and safe environment, positive behaviour and respectful relationships for all students in our school. We recognise the importance of student friendships and peer support in helping children and students feel safe and less isolated. We acknowledge that some students may need extra social, emotional or educational support at school, and that the needs of students will change over time as they grow and learn.

A summary of the universal (whole of school), targeted (year group specific) and individual engagement strategies used by our school is included below:

### Universal

- high and consistent expectations of all staff, students and parents and carers
- prioritise positive relationships between staff and students, recognising the fundamental role this plays in building and sustaining student wellbeing
- creating a culture that is inclusive, engaging and supportive and that embraces and celebrates diversity and empowers all students to participate and feel valued
- welcoming all parents/carers and being responsive to them as partners in learning
- analysing and being responsive to a range of school data such as attendance, , parent survey data, student management data and school level assessment data

Teachers at Warragul & District Specialist School use the **WDSS Gradual Release of Responsibility** instructional framework and **WDSS Workshop Model**.

- to ensure an explicit, common and shared model of instruction and that evidenced-based, high impact teaching practices are incorporated into all lessons

- teachers at Warragul & District Specialist School adopt a broad range of teaching and assessment approaches to effectively respond to the diverse learning styles, strengths and needs of our students and follow the standards set by the Victorian Institute of Teaching
- our school's Statement of Values and School Philosophy are incorporated into our curriculum and promoted to students, staff and parents so that they are shared and celebrated as the foundation of our school community
- carefully planned transition programs to support students moving into different stages of their schooling
- positive behaviour and student achievement is acknowledged in the classroom, and formally in school assemblies and communication to parents
- monitor student attendance and implement attendance improvement strategies at a whole-school, cohort and individual level
- students have the opportunity to contribute to and provide feedback on decisions about school operations through forums such as Student Representative Council (SRC), class meetings and unit assemblies. Students are also encouraged to speak with their teachers, Unit Coordinator, Assistant Principal and Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns.
- all students are welcome to self-refer to the Student Wellbeing team, School Nurse, Unit Coordinator, Assistant Principal and Principal if they would like to discuss a particular issue or feel as though they may need support of any kind. We are proud to have an 'open door' policy where students and staff are partners in learning
- we engage in school wide positive behaviour support with our staff and students, which includes programs such as:
  - *Zones of Regulation*
  - *Team Teach*
  - *Respectful Relationships*
  - *Live for Life*
- programs, incursions and excursions developed to address issue specific needs or behaviour (i.e. anger management programs)
- opportunities for student inclusion (i.e. sports teams, clubs, recess and lunchtime activities)
- buddy programs, peers support programs
- measures are in place to empower our school community to identify, report and address inappropriate and harmful behaviours such as racism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination or harassment.

### **Targeted**

- Koorie students are supported to engage fully in their education, in a positive learning environment that understands and appreciates the strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture
- our English as a second language students are supported through our EAL program, and all cultural and linguistically diverse students are supported to feel safe and included in our school
- we support learning and wellbeing outcomes of students from refugee background
- we provide a positive and respectful learning environment for our students who identify as LGBTIQ+ and follow the Department's policy on LGBTIQ Student Support
- all students in Out of Home Care are supported in accordance with the Department's policy on Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care including being appointed a Learning Mentor,

having an Individual Learning Plan and a Student Support Group (SSG) and being referred to Student Support Services for an Educational Needs Assessment

- students with a disability are supported to be able to engage fully in their learning and school activities in accordance with the Department's policy on Students with Disability, such as through reasonable adjustments to support access to learning programs, consultation with families and where required, student support groups and individual education plans
- believing that student engagement and wellbeing is the responsibility of ALL staff at Warragul & District Specialist School
- staff seek to improve the physical, emotional, cognitive and environmental aspects of students' lives in order to support them to live fulfilling lives and reach their full learning potential
- staff participate in professional learning daily, in teaching and learning, PBS and student wellbeing meetings, in daily briefings, in teams and individually through coaching, mentoring and modelling through consultation and with guest speakers
- each unit has an appointed Unit Leader who monitors the health and wellbeing of students in their year, and act as a point of contact for students who may need additional support
- collaborate where appropriate and with the support of the student and their family, with any external allied health professionals, services or agencies that are supporting the student
- monitor individual student attendance and develop an Attendance Improvement Plan in collaboration with the student and their family
- all students from 16 and above will be assisted to develop a Transition Pathway, with targeted goals and support to plan for their future
- connect all Koorie students with a Koorie Engagement Support Officer
- all students in Out of Home Care will be monitored by the Leadership team
- wellbeing and health staff will undertake health promotion and social skills development in response to needs identified by student wellbeing data, classroom teachers or other school staff each year
- staff will apply a trauma-informed approach to working with students who have experienced trauma

### **Individual**

Warragul & District Specialist School implements a range of strategies that support and promote individual engagement.

Students are linked into other agencies when they require support and Student Support Groups are conducted for all students. Our teachers provide a pivotal role in determining individual student's wellbeing and subsequent referral.

Recognizing that our students may lack the necessary skills to develop strong sense of self, our school is committed to enhancing student's resilience and confidence through the acknowledgement and celebration of success in their learning as well as the positive relationships and connections they make within the school and school community.

Student knowledge and capacity is developed by:

- Staffs' belief in developing motivated, creative and independent learners who demonstrate strong social values and whose leadership, resilience and self-esteem is evident when interacting in with their community.

- Having high expectations for every student to reach their individual learning goals.
- Inspiring our students to be responsible and accountable
- Matching teaching strategies/approaches to students prior interest and learning
- Being explicit about purposeful, authentic emotional regulation, numeracy and literacy learning

We achieve this by:

- Developing a deep understanding of Positive Behaviour Support, numeracy and literacy content and teaching strategies.
- Having strong ongoing assessment and evaluation practices that incorporate constructive feedback to our students
- Monitoring and analysing student learning using evidence based assessment tools and data
- Embedding the school's strategic planning within an effective, continuous improvement cycle

These can include:

- building constructive relationships with students at risk or students who are vulnerable due to complex individual circumstances
- meeting with student and their parent/carer to talk about how best to help the student engage with school
- developing an Individual Learning Plan and/or a Behaviour Support Plan
- considering if any environmental changes need to be made, for example changing the classroom set up
- referring the student to:
  - school-based wellbeing supports
  - Student Support Services
  - Appropriate external supports such as council based youth and family services, other allied health professionals, headspace, child and adolescent mental health services or Child First/ Orange Door

Where necessary the school will support the student's family to engage by:

- being responsive and sensitive to changes in the student's circumstances and health and wellbeing
- collaborating, where appropriate and with the support of the student and their family, with any external allied health professionals, services or agencies that are supporting the student
- monitoring individual student attendance and developing an Attendance Improvement Plans in collaboration with the student and their family
- engaging with our regional Koorie Education Support Officers
- running regular Student Support Group meetings for all students;
  - *with a disability*
  - *in Out of Home Care*
  - *with other complex needs that require ongoing support and monitoring.*

#### 4. Identifying students in need of support

Warragul & District Specialist School is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. The Student Wellbeing team plays a significant role in developing and implementing strategies help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. Warragul & District Specialist School will utilise the following information and tools to identify students in need of extra emotional, social or educational support:

- personal, health and learning information gathered upon enrolment and while the student is enrolled
- attendance records
- academic performance
- observations by school staff such as changes in engagement, behaviour, self-care, social connectedness and motivation
- attendance, Sentral and suspension data
- engagement with families
- self-referrals or referrals from peers

#### 5. Student rights and responsibilities

All members of our school community have a right to experience a safe and supportive school environment. We expect that all students, staff, parents and carers treat each other with respect and dignity. Our school's Statement of Values highlights the rights and responsibilities of members of our community.

Students have the right to:

- participate fully in their education
- feel safe, secure and happy at school
- learn in an environment free from bullying, harassment, violence, discrimination or intimidation
- express their ideas, feelings and concerns.

Students have the responsibility to:

- participate fully in their educational program
- display positive behaviours that demonstrate respect for themselves, their peers, their teachers and members of the school community
- respect the right of others to learn.

Students who may have a complaint or concern about something that has happened at school are encouraged to speak to their parents or carers and approach a trusted teacher or a member of the school leadership team.

Futher information about raising a complaint or concern is available in our Complaints Policy.

#### 6. Student behavioural expectations

Behavioural expectations of students are grounded in our school's Statement of Values *and School Philosophy Statement*.

Violence, bullying, and other offensive and harmful behaviours such as racism, harassment and discrimination will not be tolerated and will be managed in accordance with this policy. Bullying

behaviour will be managed in accordance with Warragul & District Specialist School's Bullying Prevention policy.

When a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our school community, Warragul & District Specialist School will institute a staged response, consistent with the Department's policies on behaviour, discipline and student wellbeing and engagement. Where appropriate, parents will be informed about the inappropriate behaviour and the disciplinary action taken by teachers and other school staff.

Our school considers, explores and implement positive and non-punitive interventions to support student behaviour before considering disciplinary measures such as detention, withdrawal of privileges or withdrawal from class.

Disciplinary measures may be used as part of a staged response to inappropriate behaviour in combination with other engagement and support strategies to ensure that factors that may have contributed to the student's behaviour are identified and addressed. Disciplinary measures at our school will be applied fairly and consistently. Students will always be provided with an opportunity to be heard.

*Disciplinary measures that may be applied include:*

- *Reminding a student that their behaviour is inappropriate*
- *teacher controlled consequences such as moving a student in a classroom or other reasonable and proportionate responses to misbehaviour*
- *referral to the Unit Level Coordinator*
- *restorative practices*
- *behaviour reviews (Behaviour Support Plans)*
- *behaviour support and intervention meetings*
- *suspension is a last resort only to be considered in extreme circumstances*

Suspension, expulsion and restrictive interventions are measures of last resort and may only be used in situations consistent with Department policy, available at:

- <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/suspensions/policy>
- <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/expulsions/policy>
- <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/restraint-seclusion/policy>

In line with Ministerial Order 1125, no student aged 8 or younger will be expelled without the approval of the Secretary of the Department of Education and Training.

The Principal of Warragul & District Specialist School is responsible for ensuring all suspensions and expulsions are recorded on CASES21.

Corporal punishment is prohibited by law and will not be used in any circumstance at our school.

**Corporal punishment is prohibited in our school and will not be used in any circumstance.**

## 7. Engaging with families

Warragul & District Specialist School values the input of parents and carers, and we will strive to support families to engage in their child's learning and build their capacity as active learners. We aim to be partners in learning with parents and carers in our school community.

We work hard to create successful partnerships with parents and carers by:

- ensuring that all parents have access to our school policies and procedures, available on our school website
- maintaining an open, respectful line of communication between parents and staff, supported by our Communicating with School Staff policy.
- providing parent volunteer opportunities so that families can contribute to school activities
- involving families with homework and other curriculum-related activities
- involving families in school decision making
- coordinating resources and services from the community for families
- including families in Student Support Groups, and developing individual plans for students.

## 8. Evaluation

Warragul & District Specialist School will collect data each year to understand the frequency and types of wellbeing issues that are experienced by our students so that we can measure the success or otherwise of our school based strategies and identify emerging trends or needs.

Sources of data that will be assessed on an annual basis include:

- incidents data (Sentral Wellbeing)
- school reports
- Parent Opinion survey
- Case management
- CASES21, including attendance and absence data
- Student Online Cases System (SOCS)

Warragul & District Specialist School will also regularly monitor available data dashboards to ensure any wellbeing or engagement issues are acted upon in a timely manner and any intervention occurs as soon as possible.

## COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in staff induction processes
- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request

Our school will also ensure it follows the mandatory parent/carer notification requirements with respect to suspensions and expulsions outlined in the Department's policies at:

- [Suspension process](#)
- [Expulsions - Decision](#)

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

The following Department of Education and Training policies are relevant to this Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy:

- [Attendance](#)
- [Student Engagement](#)

- [Child Safe Standards](#)
- [Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care](#)
- [Students with Disability](#)
- [LGBTIQ Student Support](#)
- [Behaviour - Students](#)
- [Suspensions](#)
- [Expulsions](#)
- [Restraint and Seclusion](#)

The following school policies are also relevant to this Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy:

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Statement of Values and School Philosophy
- Curriculum Framework Policy

#### POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	May 2022
Consultation	School Council- June 2022 Student Representative Council- June 2022
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	May 2023