

Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy



HELP FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Vermont South Special School on 03 9802 8199 or vermont.south.ss@education.vic.gov.au.

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.

Vermont South Special 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.

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2. School values, philosophy and vision
3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies
4. Identifying students in need of support
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POLICY

1. School profile

Vermont South Special School is committed to maximising student achievement in a broad range of programs that are appropriate to the needs of children with a mild intellectual disability aged 5 – 12. Many children also exhibit other diagnosed disabilities and medical conditions. The school is situated in an attractive residential area and is closely located to a variety of community facilities. We have an enrolment of 150 students, two thirds of whom are boys. The school has 61 staff members: 2 Principal Class, 27 teachers (Full Time Equivalent 24.8) and 32 Education Support Staff (FTE 25.4). All Victorian government school teachers meet the registration requirements of the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

Small class sizes and trained Special Education teachers with exceptional skills and dedication to their role, guarantee that children with a mild intellectual disability are given the opportunity to benefit from a quality alternative education. The school's focus on School Wide Positive Behaviour Support and planning in teams, as well as education support staff in every classroom, enhances the learning environment, supports student skill development and behaviour, and improved teacher capabilities. The school offers various programs, as well as whole school events for the benefit of the school community. We do not charge school fees and plan to continue this practice into the future. Many families make voluntary contributions to the school, which allows us to continue the valuable programs we are offering.

2. School values, philosophy and vision

VISION

Our vision is to empower students to reach their personal best.

MISSION

Vermont South Special School's mission is to provide students with the best possible foundation in life through a well-rounded education.

OBJECTIVE

Vermont South Special School's objective is to stimulate students to learn in a vibrant, nurturing, educational environment, which provides for individual needs, whilst supporting the whole school community in a climate of mutual respect and trust.

VALUES

Vermont South Special School's values are:

Respect, Responsibility, Resilience and Learning

We are learners.

We respect ourselves and each other, and understand that our attitudes and behaviours have an impact on the people around us.

We are responsible and we take care of our school and the property of others.

We are resilient and persist even when things are difficult.

Our Statement of Values is available online at: www.vermont-south-ss.vic.edu.au

3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies

Vermont South Special 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 acknowledge that some students need extra social, emotional and/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

- have 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 are responsive to them as partners in learning
- analysing and being responsive to a range of school data such as attendance, Attitudes to School Survey, parent survey data, student management data and school level assessment data
- teachers at Vermont South Special School use an instructional framework to ensure an explicit, common and shared model of instruction to ensure that evidenced-based, high yield teaching practices are incorporated into all lessons
- teachers at Vermont South Special 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
- create opportunities for cross-age connections amongst students through school plays, athletics, music programs and the Buddies program
- all students are welcome to talk to their teacher, the Principal, and Assistant Principal if they would like to discuss a particular issue or feel as though they may need support of any kind or whenever they have any questions or concerns. 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:
 - Rights, Responsibilities and Respectful Relationships
 - Bully Stoppers
 - Personal Safety Program
- programs, incursions and excursions developed to address issue-specific behaviour
- opportunities for student inclusion (i.e. lunch time clubs, social skills groups, play promotion)
- measures are in place to empower our school community to identify, report and address inappropriate and harmful behaviours such as racism, homophobia and other form of discrimination or harassment.

Targeted

- each year group has a Section Leader, a teacher responsible for their year, who monitors the health and wellbeing of students in their year, and acts as a point of contact for students who may need additional support
- 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 (refer to our Aboriginal Learning, Wellbeing and Safety Plan)
- all cultural and linguistically diverse students are supported to feel safe and included in our school including through our small class sizes and speech therapy, and through our EAL program
- we support learning and wellbeing outcomes of students from refugee background through small class sizes, speech therapy, and translated documents
- we provide a positive and respectful learning environment for our students who identify as LGBTIQA+ and follow the Department's policy on [LGBTIQA+ 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
- 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

- Individual Learning Plan
- Behaviour Escalation Plan
- Wellbeing Support Program
- Program for Students with Disabilities & Disability Inclusion
- referral to Student Welfare Coordinator and Student Support Services
- referral to ChildFirst and Orange Door
- 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
- 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 ChildFirst

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 Plan 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

Vermont South Special 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. Vermont South Special 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
- Compass Pulse data
- attendance, detention and suspension data
- engagement with families

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, racism, 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. Further information about raising a complaint or concern is available in our Complaints Policy.

6. Student behavioural expectations and management

Behavioural expectations of students are grounded in our school's Statement of Values and the Student code of conduct.

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 will be managed in accordance with our Bullying Prevention Policy.

When a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our school community, Vermont South Special School will institute a staged response, consistent with the Department's Student Engagement and Inclusion Guidelines. 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:

- warning a student that their behaviour is inappropriate
- teacher controlled consequences such as redirecting a student in a classroom or other reasonable and proportionate responses to misbehaviour
- withdrawal of privileges

- restorative practices
- reflection time
- behaviour reviews
- suspension
- expulsion

Suspension, expulsion and restrictive interventions (such as restraint and seclusion) 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 Vermont South 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.

7. Engaging with families

Vermont South Special 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

Vermont South Special 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:

- student survey data
- incidents data
- school reports
- parent survey
- case management
- CASES21, including attendance and absence data
- SOCS

Vermont South Special 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 <https://www.vermont-south-ss.vic.edu.au/our-school/#policies>
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Given to parents at information night at the beginning of the school year
- Included as annual reference in school newsletter
- 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 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](#)
- [LGBTIQA+ 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

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	June 2026
Consultation	School Council – June 2026 School Website – June 2026
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	Before June 2028