

STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Troy Gardiner or Mat Gannon.

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.

Ballarat 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.

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POLICY

1. School profile

Ballarat Specialist School caters for students aged from 3 to 18 years who have a diagnosed intellectual disability ranging from mild to profound. Our current enrolments are around 440 school-aged students. The school population is drawn from the city of Ballarat and surrounding communities

approximately within a 50km radius of the school location. Our students and staff come from diverse backgrounds and Ballarat Specialist School is committed to embracing this diversity and eliminating all forms of discrimination in the provision of education.

Our school's mission is "Achieving Personal Success Together". We strive to enable our students and staff to reach their full potential in a safe, stimulating and flexible learning environment. We value respect, responsibility and safety for our school community. Our educational programs provide a balanced and personalised curriculum where student achievement is acknowledged and celebrated.

Ballarat Specialist School is a dual-campus K-12 school organised around four stages of learning - Early Years, Primary School, Middle School and Senior School. Ballarat Specialist School acknowledges the Wadawurrung people as the traditional custodians of these lands on which we come to learn. We pay our respect to their elders past, present and emerging.

Our K-9 students are accommodated on our main Gillies Street campus. Our Early Learning Centre (ELC) caters for both 3-year-old and 4-year-old kindergarten. The ELC is part of our Early Years team with our Prep and Yr 1 students and staff. The educators in this area of the school work according to the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF). The Primary and Middle Years areas of the school utilise the Victorian Curriculum incorporating the Abilities Based Learning and Education Support (ABLES) suite. All students Prep to Year 9 have an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Our Senior School students (Yrs 10-12) are located at our 8.09-hectare FARM campus in Norman Street. Our senior students either undertake a Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC) program, or for students in high support classrooms they continue with the Victorian Curriculum. Additionally, a vast majority of students participate in Vocational Education and Training (VET) learning opportunities. The focus of learning in the Senior School is to provide students with opportunities to support their transition to post-school pathways and prepare to contribute positively to the community.

Our VET programs include: Horticulture, Hospitality and Cookery, Life Skills, Music and Performing Arts, Sport and Recreation and Visual Arts.

The school also operates a café and two retail stores, which are open to the public. The FARM Café is located at our Norman Street FARM campus. The Woolies store is located at the Gillies Street campus and the Op Shop is at the Norman Street FARM campus. Through these enterprises and our VET program we are able to offer our students pathways to future employment.

Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are implemented by classroom teachers and education assistants and supported by a team of allied health professionals and assistants in the areas of speech pathology, occupational therapy, exercise physiology and physiotherapy. A psychologist, student welfare officers, mental health practitioners and a school nurse are available to support staff, students and parents.

Ballarat Specialist School currently employs around 5 Principal Class Officers, 70 teachers and 154 education support staff members.

2. School values, philosophy and vision

Our school's mission is "Achieving Personal Success Together".

Students, staff and members of Ballarat Specialist school community are encouraged to live and demonstrate our core values of:

- Respect
- Safety
- Responsibility

Our school's vision is to empower students to reach their personal best, and fully equip them to contribute positively to society as happy, healthy young adults. Ballarat Specialist School is a PBIS School (Positive Behaviours in School). As part of this approach there are clearly stated and visible expectations that specifically taught, modelled and actively rewarded at a whole school and also at a classroom level.

Ballarat 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 respect, safety and responsibility at every opportunity.

Our Statement of Values is available online at: <https://www.ballaratss.vic.edu.au/about-us/school-policies>.

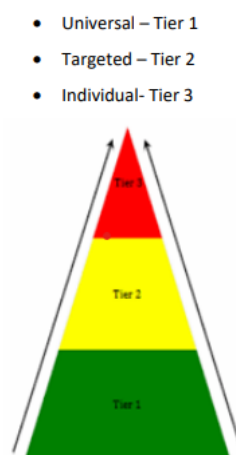
3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies

Ballarat 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.

The partnership and communication between home and school is central to student attendance and effective engagement in instruction and learning. Student engagement can be defined by three interrelated components:

- **Positive learning engagement** refers to students' participation in education, including the academic, social and extracurricular activities within the school program.
- **Emotional engagement** encompasses students' emotional responses while in the classroom and school environment. It defines the student's sense of belonging and connectedness to the school.
- **Cognitive engagement** relates to students' investment in learning and their intrinsic motivation and self-regulation.

Supports are provided in line with the Tiered Model of Intervention:



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.
- We 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. Understanding that students have unique needs and abilities.
- Welcoming all parents/carers and being responsive to them as partners in learning. Providing appropriate resources to interested parents to encourage their education around the students' 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.
- Delivering a broad curriculum including VET and VPC to ensure that students are able to choose subjects and programs that are tailored to their interests, strengths and aspirations.
- Teachers at Ballarat Specialist School use our 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 Ballarat 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 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. Listening and adapting to feedback from all parties in the transition process.
- Creating opportunities for cross-age connection.
- Positive behaviour and student achievement is acknowledged in the classroom, and formally in school assemblies and communication to parents.
- Monitoring student attendance and implementing 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 the student captains. Students are also encouraged to speak with their teachers, Mini-School Leaders, Assistant Principals and Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns.
- All students are welcome to self-refer to the Student Wellbeing Coordinator, School Nurse, School Psychologist, Mini-School Leaders, Assistant Principals 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:
 - Respectful Relationships
 - Bully Stoppers
 - Safe Schools

- 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

- Each Mini-School has a Mini-School Leader, a senior teacher responsible for their Mini-School, 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.
- 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.
- Wellbeing and health staff 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 apply a trauma-informed approach to working with students who have experienced trauma.
- Ballarat Specialist School provides a Re-engagement Program (REP) for students at risk or students who are vulnerable due to complex individual circumstances.

Individual

- 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. Recognising lived experience and knowledge, and empowering parents to take an active role in students' education.
- Developing an Individual Learning Plan and/or an Individual Behaviour Plan.
- Providing reasonable adjustments where necessary.
- 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.
 - Re-engagement programs such as Navigator.
- Participating in LOOKOUT for students in out-of-home care.
- 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 Engagement Support Officers.
- Running regular Student Support Group meetings.

4. Identifying students in need of support

Ballarat Specialist School is committed to supporting our students intellectually, emotionally and socially. The Integrated Services Team plays a significant role in developing and implementing strategies help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. Ballarat Specialist School utilises 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.
- Academic performance.
- Observations by school staff such as changes in engagement, behaviour, self-care, social connectedness and motivation.
- Attendance, detention 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, 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

Behavioural expectations of students are grounded in our school's Statement of Values.

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, Ballarat 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, and both students and families may access an advocate or mediator to assist communication if needed.

Disciplinary measures that may be applied include:

- Redirecting student/intervention.
- Verbal warning a student that their behaviour is inappropriate.
- Re-teach expectations.
- Teacher controlled consequences such as moving a student in a classroom or other reasonable and proportionate responses to misbehaviour.
- Behaviour records.
- Withdrawal of privileges.
- Restorative practices.
- Referral to the Integrated Services Team.
- Behaviour reviews.
- Behaviour support and intervention meetings.
- Suspension.
- Expulsion.

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 Ballarat 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.

7. Engaging with families

Ballarat 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.
- Providing parent volunteer opportunities so that families can contribute to school activities.
- Involving families with curriculum-related activities.
- Involving families in appropriate school decision making.
- Liaising with community-based services and NDIS to provide support for families.
- Including families in Student Support Groups and developing individual plans for students.

8. Evaluation

Ballarat 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:

- Student survey data.
- Incidents data.
- School reports.
- Parent survey.
- Case management.
- CASES21, including attendance and absence data.
- SOCS.

COMMUNICATION

- Available publicly on our school's website.
- Included in staff induction processes.

Our school will also ensure it follows the mandatory parent/carers 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

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	05/23
Consultation	School council – 05/23
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	05/25