



# STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

(Child Safe Standard 5)

Replacing Policies 5A.1 & 5A.1a

## 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.

Coburg Special Developmental 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
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## POLICY

### 1. School profile

At Coburg SDS, we strive to provide all students with the skills needed to meet their full potential through our child-centred, transdisciplinary learning approach. Students are empowered to be active members of the school and wider community by building independence, communication, and relationships. We work together as a team to provide a positive, safe, and engaging learning environment where student voice and readiness for life after school is at the centre of our teaching and learning.

Learning goals for each student are established through negotiated education plans developed in collaboration by the 'team around the learner', which can include education staff, therapy staff and families. The school employs speech and occupational therapists to ensure that all students can engage as effectively as possible with the curriculum.

Our school follows the School Wide Positive Behaviour Supports (SWPBS) framework and we continue to participate in the Northern Special Schools SWPBS Network. SWPBS has been developed from evidence and data; demonstrating the most effective ways to prevent and respond to behaviours of concern at our school. Research has shown that SWPBS is successful in reducing problem behaviour, improving school culture, and increasing academic performance. We have introduced, and are continuing to embed, Prevent, Teach, Reinforce (PTR) within our practice to support the prevention of challenging behaviours.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) have been developed and implemented focussing on Speaking and Listening and extending to Mathematics. The PLCs have been very successful in improving student outcomes, with future directions to include other areas of the curriculum. Coburg Special Developmental School has been invited to become a link school for PLC, which will see us as a positive support to other schools as well as assist our continued growth in practice and knowledge.

Our school values are Building Independence, Building Communication and Building Relationships. These values were developed with input from staff, students, and families during 2017 and reflected upon in 2019 during the review process. Our values embody what is important to everyone in our school community. With 2023 being a review year, we will have the opportunity to review these values next year.

### 2. School values, philosophy and vision

Coburg SDS has a well-developed curriculum for students with a disability and uses a Child Centred Learning approach that works towards meeting the individual needs of each student. Learning goals for each student are established through negotiated education plans developed in collaboration between the team around the learner, which can include education staff, therapy staff, and families. The school employs speech and occupational therapists to support our students to ensure that all students can engage as effectively as possible with the curriculum. Our therapists are pivotal in ensuring that all students have the communication and sensory supports in place in the classroom so that all learning opportunities can be maximised. Communication, functional skills and social and emotional learning are embedded through all aspects of our programs. Our therapy team works with teachers to provide the support to assist our students to engage in their learning.

Our school follows the SW-PBIS framework and we are a part of the Northern Network Training group as well as a Northern Special Schools Network. SW-PBIS has been developed from evidence and data; demonstrating the most effective ways to prevent and respond to problem behaviour at school. Research has shown that SW-PBIS is successful in reducing problem behaviour, improving school culture, and increasing academic performance.

Our school values are **Building Independence, Building Communication and Building Relationships**. These values were developed with input from staff and families during 2017. Our values reflect what is important to everyone at our school community.

## **Building Independence**

All students are supported to develop their own abilities in the area of independence and life skills. Coburg SDS believes that every child can learn and every child has the right to a safe and engaging learning environment. Our school looks at learning as a continuous process and lifelong journey for both students and staff. All students learn in their own way and the team around the learner (teacher, education support, therapy staff) work together to identify the student's strengths and needs so they can build an educational program suited to the child.

## **Building Communication**

Our school has a communication policy based on the Communication Bill of Rights which advocates that "all people with a disability of any extent or severity have a basic right to affect, through communication, the conditions of their existence." Students at Coburg SDS are supported to find their voice through a range of AAC and Visual Supports. They are encouraged to make choices, accept, reject and make comments. Our School has a Student Voice Co-ordinator who works to embed practices from the Amplify Program such as developing student leadership and student decision making throughout the school as well as building agency in their own learning.

## **Building Relationships**

Having positive relationships enhances quality of life for our students, their families and the community in which they are engaged. Play based learning in the Early Years helps to build the foundation of social learning needed to later participate in group activities, projects and community activities. Students learn how to engage the community in a safe and positive way through life skills and health and wellbeing programs. Students have opportunities to engage in our local community through activities such as shopping, Café Coburg, school incursions and visits to the local library.

### **3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies**

**Following the SWPBS framework, our school has implemented a range of Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 strategies to meet the needs of all students.**

#### *Universal (Tier 1 strategies)*

- Achievable and relevant whole school values developed with support from the whole school community: Building Independence, Building Communication, Building Relationships.
- An expectations/learning Matrix based on these values developed with support from all school staff.
- A SW-PBIS team that meets fortnightly and presents regularly to the wider school community.
- Data driven SW-PBIS meetings which support decisions made about school supports.
- Following the standards set by the Victorian Institute of Teaching we have built a culture of compassion and professionalism using High Impact Teaching Strategies and other evidence based teaching practice.
- A Child Centred Approach where the Team around the learner meet to discuss and plan goals, strategies and individual needs of the student.
- A range of Visual Supports and ACC around the school to support Communication and Learning.
- All Students are supported to have an individualised Communication System that meets their abilities and needs.

- Programs that support and teach positive social engagement and build self-regulation skills such as the Zones of Regulation, Play Based Learning and Colourful Semantics.
- Positive behaviour and student achievement is acknowledged in the classroom through individual reward systems, as well as formally in school assemblies.
- We monitor student attendance and implement attendance improvement strategies at a whole-school, cohort and individual level.
- The school is developing ways to improve student voice with the position of Student Voice Co-ordinator, assembly presentations and the trial of new communication activities
- All staff educated in recent changes to the child safe standards and mandatory reporting responsibilities.
- 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 (Tier 2 strategies)

- 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 coordinator, and all cultural and linguistically diverse students are supported to feel safe and included in our school through special school events recognising cultural diversity eg Harmony Day
- we support learning and wellbeing outcomes of students from refugee background through [individual education programs and behaviour support programs where necessary.
- 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
- 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
- students enrolled under the Department's international student program are supported in accordance with our legal obligations and Department policy and guidelines at: [International Student Program](#)
- Each year level area has a Section Coordinator, a senior teacher responsible for their year level who supports other staff and guides decision making about that area.
- SW-PBIS team help implement strategies targeted at specific concerns within the school based on information provided by the Star Welfare Data Co-ordinator, for example transitioning from yard times.
- Teachers work in Professional Learning Teams to develop theme units based on the Victorian Curriculum that meet the needs and engage all students of differing abilities.

- Section areas organise a range of incursions and excursions to create new learning opportunities for their students including shopping programs, library visits, walks and sporting programs.
- All students from Year 10 and above will be assisted to develop a Career Action Plan, with targeted goals and support to plan for their future.
- Specific support roles and responsibilities across the school such as Student Welfare Officer, Out of Home Care Co-ordinator, Parent Engagement Co-ordinator and Indigenous Education Officer.
- Senior Students participate in a future pathways program to help guide their transition after school.
- Senior students participate in a range of specialised programs based on their needs and abilities including Interschool sports, swimming, Café Coburg.

### Individual (Tier 3 strategies)

- School processes and procedures based on Safety Behaviours (Major) and Engagement Behaviours (Minor) to keep staff and students safe are in all classrooms.
- Behaviour Support Meetings which involve all staff working with the student to develop support strategies.
- De-escalation Plans (Behaviour Support) which use preventative and responsive strategies to support the student to re-engage in the classroom.
- Behaviour Alerts given to staff across the school to support the student in various settings such as the yard, office and Engine Room.
- Re-engagement areas to help support students to de-escalate such as 'The Rocks' (sensory garden) and Engine Room.

Our School implements a range of strategies that support and promote individual engagement. 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 ChildFirst
  - Re-engagement programs such as Navigator

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

- Being responsive and sensitive to any changes in the student's circumstances and health and wellbeing.
- Collaborating with the student's support network and helping to organise case conferences with family, support services and staff when needed.

- Information nights and sessions to help inform families about services provided inside and outside of the school.
- Helping to link families with translators for meetings and case conferences.
- Providing the Parent Hub, an inviting space for parents to engage, collect resources and seek support.
- Providing opportunities for the Parents to be involved in the school such as morning teas, assemblies, working bees, shopping excursions and celebrations.
- Parent Engagement Co-ordinator to support and promote parent engagement (who is also a member of SW PBIS team).
- 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 for all students each term:
  - 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**

Coburg SDS is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. All students in our school have a moderate to severe intellectual disability and need additional support to learn communication, engage with others and develop independence skills. Students are supported by a range of specialists within and outside of the school environment. The Child Centred Learning approach ensures that each student has an Individualised Learning Program which meets their specific needs and is reflected upon each week at CCL meetings. Goals and tasks are broken down into achievable steps during these meetings with a particular focus each week during flexi and fixed sessions with support from therapy staff.

We use the following assessments and processes to identify the individual needs of our students:

- IQ assessments completed upon enrolment and again in Year 6.
- Personal, health and learning information gathered upon enrolment and while the student is enrolled.
- Victorian Curriculum supporting documents and indicators referred to throughout planning.
- Therapy assessments such as speech assessments, oral motor assessments and gross motor assessments.
- Task Analysis where appropriate.
- Child Centred Learning Meetings which collate the progress of student goals and regularly update them based on their progress.
- ABLES Online assessment twice a year to indicate students abilities and progress.
- Reporting twice a year on student goals.
- Attendance records and notifications to families.
- Observations and Summative assessment by teachers and ES.
- Behaviour data on Xuno.
- Functional Behaviour Assessment forms.

If we feel a student needs additional support it may be appropriate to:

- Discuss concerns with a member of leadership, Welfare Officer or Child Safety Officer.

- Contact the family for a meeting to discuss services or supports that might help the student within and outside of the school.
- Contact the family to organise a Case Conference with the student's support team.
- Contact CHILD FIRST, DHS or Victoria Police and follow mandatory reporting protocols.
- All staff are aware of the Child Safe Standards support material and reporting advice when concerned about a student's change in behaviour or appearance.

## **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:

- Access the curriculum and have an individualised learning program that meets their needs.
- Adult support to access educational programs and activities that are meaningful and engaging.
- Build positive relationships and experiences at school.
- Feel safe, secure and happy at school.
- Learn in an environment free from bullying, harassment, violence, racism, discrimination or intimidation.
- Communicate and express their ideas, feelings and concerns.

Students have the responsibility to:

- Follow the school values of Building Communication, Building Independence and Building Relationships.
- To engage with the school matrix to the best of their ability.
- Engage in programs to the best of their ability with a positive approach.

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.

## **6. Student behavioural expectations**

At Coburg SDS we follow the SW-PBIS framework. We understand that behavioural problems are learning problems and that explicit teaching of appropriate social behaviours, emotional awareness and communication skills are needed to change undesired behaviours. Evidence based research has shown that responding to misbehaviour with reprimands alone will not change a child's behaviour. Our school focuses on proactive strategies such as rewards, modelling positive behaviour, error correction techniques, visual supports, explicit teaching and building positive relationships. Consequences to actions must be suitable to the individual student and specific situation as our students have varying understanding of social context or the cause and effect of their actions.

Everyone in the school community has the right to feel safe and be protected from harm. When a student's behaviour is identified as unsafe to themselves or others, staff follow emergency procedures that are in place to ensure the safety of all, for example evacuations or lock downs. A reoccurring safety behaviour of concern will be supported by a behaviour support plan (de-escalation plan) designed by the team working with the student. This team will include the teacher, education support

staff, therapy staff, members of the SW-PBIS team, other staff members from the section area, members of leadership and sometimes family members. This plan will try to address behaviours proactively as well as provide a safety plan for staff and strategies to help de-escalate behaviours.

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.

The school works within the Framework for the Reduction and Elimination of Restraint and Seclusion. All situations of these are followed through with DET protocols.

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 Coburg Special Developmental 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**

Coburg Special Developmental 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
- Providing regular information about resources, policy updates and educational information in our school newsletters.
- Maintaining an open, respectful line of communication between parents and staff.
- Providing opportunities for parents to engage in school activities such as fortnightly school assemblies, whole school events such as Science Day and education week activities.
- Involving families in school decision making through active participation in school council and regular parent information sessions.
- Coordinating resources and services from the community for families.
- Including families in Student Support Group meetings and developing individual plans for students.
- Parent Engagement Co-ordinator to support and promote parent engagement (who is also a member of SW PBIS team).

## **8. Evaluation**

Coburg Special Developmental 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

Coburg Special Developmental 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
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- 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 Policy
- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Statement of Values and School Philosophy

## POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	8/06/2022
Consultation	School Council 21/06/2022 Community through newsletter 24/06/2022
Approved by	Principal

Next scheduled review date in 2 years	June 2024
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