



Whitehorse Primary School

Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy



HELP FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Whitehorse Primary School on 03 9878 9339 or whitehorse.ps@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.

Whitehorse Primary 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

Whitehorse Primary School is a co-educational school that caters for children from Prep to Grade 6. Our attractive campus is located in a quiet residential part of Blackburn North. We have a diverse student population and a warm, friendly and vibrant community. Our dedicated staff and students are committed to a culture of learning excellence. We are very proud of our strong curriculum program that provides high quality educational opportunities for all students.

Whitehorse Primary School's vision is to actively support the development of the whole child by delivering life-long learning skills for the 21st Century including relevant academic, social and emotional skills. To enable this, we offer a variety of programs to cater for the interests and needs of our students. Specialist teachers provide weekly sessions in Visual Art, Chinese, Performing Arts, STEM and Physical Education. We also offer a number of student led lunchtime clubs and extra-curricular opportunities. Our Stephanie Alexander Kitchen and Garden is a key part of our school and has a strong connection to our academic and wellbeing programs.

Whitehorse Primary School also operates Seedlings@Whitehorse Kindergarten and Warekila Kindergarten. Both programs offer support for 3 year old and 4 year old children. Students in these programs are able to forge a close connection with our school and ongoing access to our school facilities prepares children for a successful transition into primary school.

Students are supported throughout their school journey with many focussed programs and by ensuring that the learning environment is safe, happy and supportive. We encourage parent participation in the programs of the school and welcome feedback from the community

We are a school committed to a culture of teaching and learning excellence. We are very proud of our strong academic program and a rich curriculum that develops the whole child and promotes real-world learning. Our class structure allows for a highly flexible, developmental approach to classroom learning. Catering to individual learning needs and interests prepares our children for living, working and succeeding in an increasingly globalised, digital world.

2. School values, philosophy and vision

Whitehorse Primary School's Statement of Values, School Vision and 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, at every opportunity.

School Values :

Respect yourself, Respect others and Respect your school

School Vision:

At Whitehorse Primary School we actively support the development of the whole child by delivering life-long learning skills including relevant academic, social and emotional skills.

3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies

Whitehorse Primary 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
- Prioritising 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, Attitudes to School Survey, parent survey data, student management data and school level assessment data
- Teachers at Whitehorse Primary 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 Whitehorse Primary 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 support students moving into different stages of their schooling
- Acknowledging positive behaviour and student achievement in the classroom, and formally at whole school assemblies and communication to parents
- Monitoring 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 the Student Representative Council and other forums including year group meetings, focus groups and surveys. Students are also encouraged to speak with their teachers, Year Level Coordinator, Assistant Principal and Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns.
- Creating opportunities for cross-age connections amongst students through school plays, athletics, music programs and buddy programs
- All students are welcome to self-refer to their classroom teacher, School Counsellor, Year Group Leaders, 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:
 - Respectful Relationships
 - SWPBS
 - Restorative Practice
 - Circle Time
- Programs, incursions and excursions developed to address issue specific needs or behaviour (SWPBS, By-stander 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 and other forms of discrimination or harassment.

Targeted

- Each year level PLC Team is responsible for the monitoring of the health and wellbeing of ALL students in their year, and act 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 have a dedicated staff member in the role as Marrung Leader who is responsible for leading programs which support our Koorie students
- Our English as a second language and refugee students are supported through our EAL program, and all cultural and linguistically diverse students are supported to feel safe and included in our school

- 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](#)

Individual

Whitehorse Primary 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 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 Engagement 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

Whitehorse Primary 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 to help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. Whitehorse Primary 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 data
- engagement with families
- self-referrals or referrals from peers
- SSG meetings

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 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, Whitehorse Primary 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 implements positive and non-punitive interventions to support student behaviour before considering disciplinary measures such as detention, withdrawal of privileges or withdrawal from class.

At Whitehorse Primary School, we strive to create a safe, supportive and inclusive environment by showing respect for ourselves, for others, and for our school. We believe by helping students practise good behaviour, we will build a school community where all students learn in an environment where they can succeed and grow.

School Wide Positive Behaviour (SWPBS)

SWPBS is an evidence-based school wide framework that brings our school community together to develop a positive, safe and supportive learning culture. SWPBS provides a framework and strategies that when adopted across the whole school will set clear, consistent expectations and positive values.

By implementing SWPBS at Whitehorse PS, we aim to:

- Provide a safe and orderly environment to enhance learning
- Embed common behavioural expectations for our school community
- Improve social-emotional wellbeing
- Increase respectful and positive behaviour

All students are explicitly taught expected behaviours through designated lessons, teachable moments and regular reference to the WPS Behaviour Expectations Matrix. These expected behaviours are aligned with our school values, Respect for Yourself, Others and Your School. All classrooms, learning spaces and relevant areas have the WPS Behaviour Expectations Matrix clearly displayed for ease and regularity of reference.

At Whitehorse Primary School teachers:

- Understand that expected behaviours, like academic subjects, must be explicitly taught.
- Discuss the expected behaviours and the importance and reasons for adhering to the matrix.
- Demonstrate and model the social skills.
- Acknowledge and provide positive feedback.
- Use data to make decisions
- Reflect and adjust as needed to ensure students' success.

Through this system of affirming positive behaviours and making behaviour expectations clearly visible and accessible, we foster and maintain a positive and respectful culture at our school. This approach ensures children feel safe and supported, to reach their personal and academic potential.

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 moving a student in a classroom or other reasonable and proportionate responses to misbehaviour
- withdrawal of privileges
- referral to the Year Level Coordinator
- restorative practices
- detentions
- 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.

The Principal of Whitehorse Primary 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

Whitehorse Primary 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

Whitehorse Primary 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

Whitehorse Primary 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
- 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/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 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](#)
- [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	September 2024
Consultation	School Council Wellbeing sub-committee Staff
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	September 2026