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|  | **Swan Hill Specialist School** | |
| **Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy** | |

# Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Swan Hill Specialist School on 03 5032 3683 or swan.hill.ss@education.vic.gov.au.

# Purpose

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

1. our commitment to providing a safe and supportive learning environment for students
2. expectations for positive student behaviour
3. support available to students and families
4. our school’s policies and procedures for responding to inappropriate student behaviour.

Swan Hill 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. Wellbeing and engagement strategies
4. Identifying students in need of support
5. Student rights and responsibilities
6. Student behavioural expectations
7. Engaging with families
8. Evaluation

# Policy

## School profile

Swan Hill Specialist School has a strong positive profile in the local Swan Hill community. Located at the edge of the township the site includes classrooms, an allied health building, a hall and commercial kitchen, a kitchen garden and an indoor swimming pool as additional resources. The school site is large and accommodates a community kitchen garden at the rear. A $1.64m building project started in 2022 with a roofed multipurpose court to be built and a master-plan for future development has been completed. Mid-year we received further notification of stage 2 with a $6 million dollar project to refurbish the main building. The 85 enrolled students come from a wide surrounding rural area with some travelling very long distances to access a specialist education. A high percentage of students come by subsidised bus transport, including a school self-managed bus service. Students are from a diverse socio-economic background with many families significantly disadvantaged, evidenced by a high Student Family Occupation (SFO) density of 0.82.  Many students have a multi disability such as intellectual disability along with autism or a physical, emotional and behavioural disability. A small percentage of students come from language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE) and there are approximately 19% of students who come from an indigenous background. There are over 45 staff members. 2 Principal Class, 14.97 teachers, 18 part time Education Support for classrooms (13.5, two of whom identify as indigenous), Education Support Administration of 12.82 and Allied Health of 1.2 staff who all have access to coaching from a coaching team of Leading Teachers and Learning Specialists. Included also is a bus driver .84, Cross Infection cleaner.40, Gardener .40 and an indigenous support assistant of .79. A multi-disciplinary team of allied health professionals including a social worker and speech pathologist are employed by the school and a school nurse and occupational therapist are contracted to the school to support classroom teachers to provide classroom based educational programs and to maintain safe physical environments and mobility advice. The school also has available access to a Network SSS Team. Senior students undertake a project based VPC and capable students additionally undertake VET competency-based offerings. Specialist programs in art, music, and physical education are an integral part of the educational program. Classrooms are equipped with ICT technology and there are netbooks and iPads as tools for learning. The school has excellent links with the local community focused on educational opportunities, transition links, recreation and welfare. Programs such as Inclusion Outreach Coaching are run through the school and provide quality links to other local schools. The SHSS regularly shares its expertise with neighbouring schools. Students, staff and families work together to create the best opportunities for learning within a safe and supportive environment.

Swan Hill Specialist School’s vision is “to prepare students to leave school with social, emotional and academic skills for life.”  The school’s priority is to provide a safe, positive and challenging environment with positive behaviours expected of all stakeholders in a high expectation environment where the child and their educational needs are at the centre of decision making. The school is committed to embedding a culture of child safety and ensuring that each of its policies and procedures demonstrate a zero tolerance of child abuse within its community. Its aim is to continue to build strong relationships between staff, students, parents, careers and the wider community. The Swan Hill Specialist School aims to provide a high-quality individual learning program for each student, which meets their intellectual, social, emotional and physical needs.  The school purpose and values form the basis for all, which happens within the school and school community. Our values are: Belonging, Trust and Kindness.

## Wellbeing and engagement strategies

Swan Hill 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, Attitudes to School Survey, parent survey data, student management data and school level assessment data
* deliver a broad curriculum including VET programs and VPC to ensure that students are able to choose subjects and programs that are tailored to their interests, strengths and aspirations
* teachers at Swan Hill Specialist School use a workshop model 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 Swan Hill 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 the Student Representative’s to School Council. Students are also encouraged to speak with their teachers, Assistant Principal and Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns.
* create opportunities for cross—age connections amongst students through school plays, athletics, music programs and peer support programs
* all students are welcome to self-refer to the Mental Health Practitioner, 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
  + Safe Schools
* 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)
* 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.
* 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 [LGBTQI Student Support](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/lgbtiq-student-support/policy).
* all students in Out of Home Care are supported in accordance with the Department’s policy on [Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/supporting-students-out-home-care/policy) 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](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/students-disability/policy), 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](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/international-student-program/guidance/supporting-students-learning-and-engagement-section-7)
* 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
* Swan Hill Specialist School assists students to plan their Year 10 work experience, supported by their Career Action Plan

### Individual

Swan Hill Specialist Schoolimplements 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.

## Identifying students in need of support

Swan Hill 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 to help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. Swan Hill 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, detention and suspension data
* engagement with families
* self-referrals or referrals from peers

## 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.

## Student behavioural expectations and support

Behavioural expectations of students are grounded in our school’s Statement of Values/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, Swan Hill 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:

* 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
* restorative practices
* 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 Swan Hill 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.

## Engaging with families

Swan Hill 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.

## Evaluation

Swan Hill 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

Swan Hill 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](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/suspensions/guidance/1-suspension-process)
* [Expulsions - Decision](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/expulsions/guidance/decision)

# Further information and resources

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

* [Attendance](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/attendance/policy)
* [Student Engagement](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-engagement/policy)
* [Child Safe Standards](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/child-safe-standards/policy)
* [Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/supporting-students-out-home-care/policy)
* [Students with Disability](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/students-disability/policy)
* [LGBTIQ Student Support](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/lgbtiq-student-support/policy)
* [Behaviour - Students](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/behaviour-students/policy)
* [Suspensions](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/suspensions/policy)
* [Expulsions](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/expulsions/policy)
* [Restraint and Seclusion](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/restraint-seclusion/policy)

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

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| Policy last reviewed | 13th September, 2023 |
| Consultation | School Council – 30th October, 2023  Newsletter - Ongoing |
| Approved by | Jodi Walters, Principal |
| Next scheduled review date | Before September, 2025 |