



# Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy



## Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact VCD on 9510 1706 or [Victorian.ds@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:Victorian.ds@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.

Victorian College for the Deaf 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

Victorian College for the Deaf, first established by Frederick J Rose in 1860, is a unique school setting. Centrally located on St Kilda Road and High Street in a vibrant heritage garden, we attract students

from across Melbourne. VCD is the only P-12 Bilingual/Bimodal School for Deaf children in Australia. Staff comprise both Deaf and hearing teachers together with educational support staff, creating a diverse, supportive and engaging work environment. There are currently 60 students taking part in our rich Deaf specific educational program.

We equip our students for success with skills, knowledge and experience for a prosperous future. The development of strong communication and literacy skills are central to our work. Auslan is our inclusive instructional language, and English our language for reading, writing and speaking. Individual Learning Plans are developed in partnership with families.

We teach to the Victorian Curriculum and in the senior years, the college offers studies in VCAL, VET, VCE and VPC/VPC modified. We work closely with other schools and organisations to broaden the educational opportunities for our students.

Our teaching program is enriched by our many extra-curricular programs, a productive garden, and vocational education delivered through our award winning social enterprises, Tradeblock Café and Ablock bike shop.

VCD is a dynamic school tasked with seeking solutions for Deaf students. A recent review has set some exciting guidelines for 2020 and beyond. Our mission is to lift the educational outcomes of students beyond the norms of Deaf Education globally.

## **2. School values, philosophy and vision**

### **VISION**

*Victorian College for the Deaf graduates will have the choice to go where there is no path and leave their trail.*

### **MISSION**

Our mission is to provide deaf students with an education that empowers them with choices in life. We believe that effective communication, celebration of success and rigorous, quality teaching with high expectations for every child will enable our students to reach their full potential. We acknowledge we cannot do it alone. It is only in rich partnership with families and the wider community that our students will be supported socially, emotionally and academically.

### **COLLEGE VALUES**

Our school community recognises the importance of, and a responsibility for, ensuring our school is a safe, supportive and educational environment, which respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of children and young people, and enables them to thrive in their learning and development. Students are involved in decisions that affect their lives and have an active voice in their own wellbeing.

Victorian College for the Deaf affirms that all Deaf children have the right to access equitable education based on best bilingual and bicultural practices, which includes instruction in Auslan (Australian Sign Language) and English. They will be able to celebrate and understand their Deaf identity and culture.

As part of VCDs school wide positive behaviour initiative, the school embraces the following values and recognises students demonstrating these values to encourage wellbeing and positive culture.

**LEARNING | RESILIENCE | RESPECT | RESPONSIBILITY | PRIDE**

### 3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies

Victorian College for the Deaf has developed a range of strategies to promote wellbeing, 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.

#### Universal Supports

- VCD ensures high and consistent expectations of all staff, students and parents and carers, beginning with the school motto “Utmost for the highest”.
- VCD implements a behaviour expectations matrix, where the 5 school values are mapped to different learning spaces- the classroom, outside play areas, the digital world and broader public / community spaces.
- VCD has families from 15 different language groups typically enrolled at the college. VCD embraces all families through enabling language interpretation of parent events, family meetings, and with specialised home visiting service to ensure inclusive access to all college publications.
- VCD delivers a school wide positive behaviour approach and program. Positive behaviour and student achievement is acknowledged in the classroom, and formally in school assemblies and communication to parents. VCD has a merit system where student behaviour is recognised and rewarded.
- Positive relationships between staff and students is prioritised, recognising the fundamental role this plays in building and sustaining student wellbeing. This is also enhanced through the Punt or High House allocations, camps program, sports days, and assemblies.
- VCD works to create a culture that is inclusive, engaging and supportive. Every student at VCD has an ILP that is developed with them and their family. The ILP is reviewed each 6 months and is an opportunity for feedback about wellbeing and engagement; identity; and belonging.
- VCD welcomes all parents/carers and being responsive to them as partners in learning. This is enhanced through VCD’s *Parents as Partners* program. VCD provides informal opportunities for families to gather on campus as well as formal parent information nights on topics of interest and the Auslan for Families program.
- VCD analyses and is 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. VCD regularly surveys the interests/ concerns of parents to ensure it is meeting their needs as education partners.
- VCD delivers a broad curriculum including VET programs, VPC and VCE to ensure that students can choose subjects and programs that are tailored to their interests, strengths and aspirations.
- Drawing on the principles of the Victorian Teaching and Learning Model (VTLM), teachers at VCD use an instructional framework to ensure an explicit, common and shared model of teaching to ensure that evidenced-based, high yield teaching practices are incorporated into all lessons.

- Teachers at VCD school adopt an evidence based specialised teaching and assessment approach to effectively respond to the needs for deaf and hard of hearing student and follow the standards set by the Victorian Institute of Teaching
- VCD'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.
- VCD has carefully planned transition programs to support students moving into different stages of their schooling.
- VCD monitors attendance and ensure that students who have 3 days absence are actively followed up by the Wellbeing team. Where appropriate a wellbeing and engagement plan to improve attendance is initiated.
- Students have the opportunity to contribute to and provide feedback on decisions about school operations. For example through the Student Representative Council; Home Group discussions; School Captain and House Captain meetings. Students are also encouraged to speak with their teachers, Home Group Teacher, Assistant Principal and Principal or members of the Wellbeing team whenever they have any questions or concerns.
- Create opportunities for cross—age connections amongst students through school assemblies, sports days, the Wellbeing Hub and house activities.
- All students are welcome to self-refer to the Wellbeing-Team, Homegroup Teacher, 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. This is enhanced through the operation of our Wellbeing Hub. A suite of VCD wellbeing referral and planning templates supports this process. (available on request from the school office)
- VCD follows the DET Child Protect 4 stage critical actions in instances of suspect or actual child abuse or sexual offending or family violence.
- VCD engages in school wide positive behaviour support with our staff and students, which includes programs such as:
  - Respectful Relationships
  - VCAA health curriculum
  - 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)
- 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, homophobia and other forms of discrimination or harassment.

### Targeted Supports

- During the year the Home Group Teacher, Teachers and Wellbeing-team monitor the health and wellbeing of students in their year, and act as a point of contact for students who may need additional support.
- The VCD wellbeing team meets each week to discuss priority students who have been identified and referred for wellbeing support.

- F-10 teachers meet fortnightly and raise any issues of concern with the Wellbeing team
- In addition, a senior team meeting meets fortnightly and may discuss issues of wellbeing and engagement for referral into the Wellbeing-team.
- 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
- 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 students have a unique Individual Learning Plan, which reflects their wellbeing, identity and belonging goals. The ILP is intended to support the student's learning and achievement through wholistic support based on the students' identified needs, goals and aspirations.
- We support learning and wellbeing outcomes of students from refugee background through support from the Family Engagement Leader.
- We provide a positive and respectful learning environment for our students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, queer, questioning and asexual (LGBTIQA+) and follow the Department's policy on LGBTIQA+ Student Support.
- 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, through reasonable adjustments to support access to learning programs, consultation with families and where required, student support groups and individual education plans.
- VCD assists students to plan their Year 10 work experience, supported by their Career Action Plan
- 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
- VCD follows the DET Child Protect 4 stage critical actions in instances of suspect or actual child abuse or sexual offending or family violence.

### Individual

VCD implements a range of strategies that support and promote individual engagement. These include:

- Using VCDs Student Wellbeing Priority list we build constructive relationships with students at risk or students who are vulnerable due to complex individual circumstances.
- VCD teachers and wellbeing team meet with students and their parent/carer to talk about how best to help the student engage with school and to develop a health wellbeing and engagement plan where needed (Attachment A).
- VCD considers environmental changes that need to be made, for example changing the classroom set up, and can consider curriculum, scheduling and participation adjustments to match the attendance and engagement needs
- VCD will refer student to:
  - school-based wellbeing supports
  - Student Support Services
  - DFFH , VICPOL in instances of actual or suspected abuse or family violence

- 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

VCD will support a team around the learner approach to wellbeing and enlists the family to support the individual student's wellbeing and engagement 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 a Health and Wellbeing Plan where there are issues of attendance, attitude, behaviour, and psychological conditions and family circumstances that interfere with learning achievement. ( attachment A)
- engaging with our regional Koorie Education Support Officers
- participating in running regular Student Support Group meetings for students:
  - with a disability
  - in Out of Home Care
  - and with other complex needs that require ongoing support and monitoring.

#### **4. Identifying students in need of support**

VCD 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. VCD will utilise the following information and tools to identify students in need of extra emotional, social or educational support:

- observations by school staff such as changes in engagement, behaviour, mood, self-care, social connectedness and motivation
- observations of the same by parents/ carers or family members
- personal, health and learning information gathered upon enrolment and while the student is enrolled
- attendance records
- academic performance
- attendance, detention and suspension data
- engagement with families
- self-referrals or referrals from peers
- information from external agencies for example NDIS support workers engaged with the student and family.

VCD has a suite of wellbeing templates including a referral form that may be used for this purpose (see attachment A), alternatively telephone referrals, emails, meetings discussion, or referral via Compass notes is acceptable.

#### **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, 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 Wellbeing or 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 School Philosophy. Expectations and school responses to inappropriate behaviour are further explained in VCD's School Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) booklet.

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, VCD 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.

VCD will take appropriate disciplinary actions and follows a restorative justice framework as outlined in the VCD SWPBS Booklet. The booklet outlines 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.

*To manage behaviour effectively, disciplinary measures that may be applied include:*

- following our DET *Child Protect* guidelines and four critical actions,
- implementing VCD bullying policy

- undertaking restorative practices
- counselling and warning that behaviour is inappropriate, with options of acceptable behaviour mapped and agreed.
- 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 Home Group Teacher or the wellbeing co-ordinator
- detentions
- behaviour, wellbeing and ILP reviews
- suspension and 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>

Suspension from the Students with Disabilities Transport Program (STDP), e.g. the taxi service, falls under the scope of SDTP policy <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/transport-students-disabilities/guidance-introduction/administration-sdtp>

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 Victorian College for the Deaf 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.

### Restrictive interventions

Restrictive interventions are measures of last resort and may only be used in situations consistent with the Department of Education's [Restraint and Seclusion Policy](#).

## **7. Engaging with families**

VCD 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
- implementing VCD's *Parents as Partners Program*, which enables parents to be better informed about how they can support their child's learning, wellbeing and motivation to achieve in life.
- VCD provides *Auslan for Families* so that parents can develop a shared language at home – to enrich wellbeing, identity, literacy outcomes and lifelong learning.



- 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

At VCD we 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 includes:

- weekly health and wellbeing team reports on priority students
- outcomes from ILPs and Wellbeing plans
- student survey data
- incidents data
- school reports
- parent survey
- CASES21
- SOCS

## 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](#)
- [LGBTIQA+ Student Support](#)
- [Behaviour - Students](#)
- [Suspensions](#)
- [Expulsions](#)
- [Restraint and Seclusion](#)
- [Students with Disabilities Transport Program \(SDTP\)](#)

The following [school policies](#) are also relevant to the Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy:

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Statement of Values and School Philosophy

- Sexuality and Consent Policy
- Aboriginal Learning, Wellbeing and Safety Action Plan

The following documents are also relevant to the Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and are available on request: 9510 1706 or [victorian.ds@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:victorian.ds@education.vic.gov.au)

- Individual Education Plan (IEP) template
- Wellbeing referral form
- School Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) booklet

## COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to the school community via:

- School website
- Staff induction and handbook

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](#)

## REVIEW CYCLE

<b>Policy last reviewed</b>	September 2024
<b>Consultation</b>	Consultation occurred with School Council on: 23 <sup>rd</sup> June 2021 Consultation occurred with the school community (newsletter and parent survey) in June 2024
<b>Approved by</b>	Marg Tope - Principal and School Improvement Team (SIT)
<b>Next scheduled review date</b>	September 2026

