



**Westall Primary School**

# **Student Engagement & Well-Being Policy**

**Produced in consultation  
with the school community**

**To be read in conjunction with  
*Effective Schools are Engaging Schools –  
Student Engagement Policy Guidelines***

**March 2013**

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## Table of contents

<b>1 SCHOOL PROFILE STATEMENT</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2 WHOLE-SCHOOL PREVENTION STATEMENT</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3 RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4. SHARED EXPECTATIONS</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5. SCHOOL ACTIONS AND CONSEQUENCES</b>	<b>10</b>
<b><u>REFERENCES</u></b>	<b><u>11</u></b>

Green – something you need to do, or to include in the policy

Red – something to be aware of or consider as you work on the policy

Black – suggested content. Add to or delete from this according to your school context.

The principal is responsible for leading the development and implementation of the Student Engagement Policy.

The school council will be engaged in the development of the policy, as it will be responsible for approving the policy, monitoring its effectiveness and evaluating its success. The policy should be made available to all members of the school community.

## 1 School profile statement

The school profile statement should focus on student engagement and wellbeing issues. It should reflect a detailed understanding of the diversity of the student population and school community.

Schools will need to access a variety of data sources to gain a comprehensive understanding of the diversity of their school community and the engagement and wellbeing needs of their students.

Data should include feedback from students, parents/carers and the broader community.

The school evaluation resources in the School Accountability and Improvement Framework can assist schools in this process.

**[Starting point: copy statement from School Overview section of current annual report or school review documentation]**

## 2 Whole-school prevention statement

Schools should develop a positive statement about the school's values and philosophy, and the related programs and strategies being implemented by the school to promote student engagement, high attendance and positive behaviours. Element 1 of these guidelines provides an overview of areas for consideration in the development of strategies for wholeschool prevention.

This section of the policy should reflect the engagement and wellbeing goals and targets, and related school improvement strategies and actions identified through the school strategic and annual implementation planning process.

**[Starting point: copy statement from Student Engagement section of current annual report or school review documentation]**

## 3 Rights and responsibilities

### 3.1 Guiding principles

Every member of the school community has a right to fully participate in an educational environment that is safe, supportive and inclusive. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and dignity.

### 3.2 Equal Opportunity

The *Equal Opportunity Act 1995* sets out the types or grounds of discrimination that are unlawful and aims to promote community recognition and acceptance of the equality of men and women, and the equality of people of all races, regardless of their religious or political convictions, their impairments or their age.

Under the act it is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the basis of the following attributes:

- age
- breastfeeding
- gender identity

- impairment
- industrial activity
- lawful sexual activity
- marital status
- parental status or status as carer
- physical features
- political belief or activity
- pregnancy
- race
- religious belief or activity
- sex
- sexual orientation
- personal association (with a person who is identified by reference to any of the above attributes).

### 3.3 The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

The Charter sets out a list of 20 rights that reflect the following four basic principles:

- Freedom
- Respect
- Equality
- Dignity

The charter outlines a vision of human rights for all Victorians. The charter affirms that all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights. While the charter demands equality for all, it also emphasises the value of difference. The charter requires public authorities, including government schools and their employees, to act compatibly with human rights and to consider human rights when making decisions and delivering services.

- The right not to be discriminated against [javascript:void\(0\)](#):
- The right to privacy and reputation
- The right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief
- Cultural Rights

It is important to understand that with human rights comes a responsibility to respect other human rights.

All DEECD employees must act compatibly with the Charter and give proper consideration to human rights when making decisions. Everyone should:

- Encourage compliance with the Charter
- Support others to act compatibly with the Charter, and
- Respect and promote human rights

Part of the monitoring of Human Rights will be to complete the Charter Compliance Checklist on the School Compliance web site.

### 3.4 Students with disabilities

The Disability Standards for Education 2005 clarify and make more explicit the obligations on schools and the rights of students under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. The standards cover enrolment, participation, curriculum development, student support services, and harassment and victimisation.

An education provider must make 'reasonable adjustments' to accommodate a student with disability. An adjustment is a measure or action taken to assist a student with disability to participate in education and training on the same basis as other students. An adjustment is reasonable if it does this while taking into account the student's learning needs and balancing the interests of all parties affected, including those of the student with the disability, the education provider, staff and other students.

In determining whether an adjustment is reasonable, an education provider should take into account information about:

- the nature of the student's disability
- his or her preferred adjustment
- any adjustments that have been provided previously
- any recommended or alternative adjustments.

This information might come from the student, an associate of the student, independent experts, or a combination of these people.

An education provider should ensure that the student, or an associate of the student, has timely information about the processes for determining whether the proposed adjustment would cause unjustifiable hardship to the provider. The provider should also ensure that these processes maintain the dignity, respect, privacy and confidentiality of the student and the associates of the student, consistent with the rights of the rest of the community.

The provider may consider all likely costs and benefits, both direct and indirect, for the provider, the student and any associates of the student, and any other persons in the learning or wider community, including:

- costs associated with additional staffing, providing special resources or modifying the curriculum
- costs resulting from the student's participation in the learning environment, including any adverse impact on learning and social outcomes for the student, other students and teachers
- benefits of the student's participation in the learning environment, including positive learning and social outcomes for the student, other students and teachers, and
- any financial incentives, such as subsidies or grants, available to the provider if the student participates.

The DDA and the Education Standards do not require changes to be made if this would impose unjustifiable hardship to a person or organisation.

### 3.5 Bullying and harassment

#### Definitions

**Harassment** is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome or offensive to a person.

**Bullying** is repeated oppression, physical or psychological, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group.

**Cyberbullying** is a form of bullying which is carried out through an internet service such as email, chat room, discussion group, online social networking, instant messaging or web pages. It can also include bullying through mobile phone technologies such as SMS. It may involve text or images (photos, drawings)

Examples of cyberbullying behaviour are:

- teasing and being made fun of
- spreading of rumours online
- sending unwanted messages
- defamation.

Cyberbullying can happen to anyone and the bully can act anonymously if they want. People can also be bullied online by groups of people such as class groups or collective members of an online community.

It is important for the school to provide a safe and friendly environment for students and staff and to encourage care, courtesy and respect for others. All persons have a legal right to protection from harassment under the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act and the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act.

The effects of harassment or bullying include

- poor health – anxiety, depression
- lower self esteem
- reduced study performance

- missed classes, social withdrawal
- reduced career prospects

If a student sees another person being harassed or bullied they should tell the person that you witnessed the incident and advise them to report it to an appropriate person. However, if your friend is harassing another person, let them know that their behaviour is unacceptable. Bystanders who do nothing to stop bullying may be contributing to the problem by providing an audience for the bully

Harassment is usually directed at a person because of their gender, race, creed or abilities. It can be subtle or explicit.

### **Subtle: (The most common)**

They include:

- Offensive staring and leering.
- Unwanted comments about physical appearance and sexual preference.
- Racist or smutty comments or jokes.
- Questions about another's sexual activity.
- Persistent comments about a person's private life or family.
- Physical contact e.g. purposely brushing up against another's body.
- Offensive name calling.

### **Explicit: (obvious)**

They include:

- Grabbing, aggressive hitting, pinching and shoving etc.
- Unwelcome patting, touching, embracing.
- Repeated requests for dates, especially after refusal.
- Offensive gestures, jokes, comments, letters, phone calls or e-mail.
- Sexually and/or racially provocative remarks.
- Displays of sexually graphic material– pornography.
- Requests for sexual favours.

Extreme forms of sexual harassment will lead to criminal prosecution.

### **Bullying can involve such things as**

- grabbing, aggressive staring, hitting, pinching kicking, pushing and shoving.
- publicly excluding a person from your group
- taking or breaking a person's property
- knocking a person's books or belongings out of their hands or off their desk
- teasing a person because of their looks

### **Cyberbullying**

Being involved in online spaces – either at home or at school - requires students to behave responsibly. This includes:

- the language you use and the things you say
- how you treat others
- respecting people's property (eg copyright)
- visiting appropriate places.

Behaving safely online means:

- protecting your own privacy and personal information (we used to call it 'stranger danger')
- selecting appropriate spaces to work and contribute
- protecting the privacy of others (this can be sharing personal information or images)
- being proactive in letting someone know if there is something is 'not quite right'. At home this would be a parent or carer, at school a teacher.

If you are being harassed or bullied you should:

- Tell the person you don't like what they are doing and you want them to stop.
- Discuss the matter with a student leader or a teacher/coordinator that you feel comfortable with.

Your concerns will be taken seriously. All complaints will be treated confidentially.

**Rights and Responsibilities of the School Community**

Schools may like to include information on how students' behaviour could contribute to the educational, social, emotional and physical development of themselves and those around them, or information on specific ways that students should relate to those around them.

Actively teaching students whole school engagement, attendance and behavioural expectations creates a highly predictable environment that allows students to understand what is expected of them and what they can expect from each other.

They should consider the inclusion of the separate responsibilities of principals, teachers and wellbeing staff to ensure that students and parents/carers have a clear understanding of what can be expected from the school.

**Rights and Responsibilities of Students**

<b>Rights</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
<p>Students have a right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• work in a secure environment where, without intimidation, bullying (including cyber-bullying) or harassment they are able to fully develop their talents, interests and ambition</li> <li>• participate fully in the school's educational program</li> </ul>	<p>Students have a responsibility to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• participate fully in the school's educational program and to attend regularly. Students should also be expected to display positive behaviours that demonstrate respect for themselves, their peers, their teachers and all other members of the school community.</li> <li>• Demonstrate respect for the rights of others, including the right to learn, will contribute to an engaging educational experience for themselves and other students.</li> <li>• As students progress through school they will be encouraged and supported to take greater responsibility for their own learning and participation as members of the whole school community. This involves developing as individual learners who increasingly manage their own learning and growth by setting goals and managing resources to achieve these goals.</li> <li>• Students should, with support, be expected to participate fully in the school's educational program and to attend regularly. Students should also display positive behaviours that demonstrate respect for themselves, their peers, their teachers and all other members of the school community.</li> </ul>

**Rights and Responsibilities of Parents/carers**

Rights	Responsibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>parents/carers have a right to expect that their children will be educated in a secure environment in which care, courtesy and respect for the rights of others are encouraged</li> </ul>	<p>Parents/carers have a responsibility to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>promote positive educational outcomes for their children by taking an active interest in their child's educational progress and by modeling positive behaviours.</li> <li>Ensure their child's regular attendance</li> <li>Engage in regular and constructive communication with school staff regarding their child's learning.</li> <li>support the school in maintaining a safe and respectful learning environment for all students.</li> </ul>

**Rights and Responsibilities of Teachers**

Rights	Responsibilities
<p>Teachers have a right to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>expect that they will be able to teach in an orderly and cooperative environment</li> <li>be informed, within Privacy requirements, about matters relating to students that will affect the teaching and learning program for that student</li> </ul>	<p>Teachers have a responsibility to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fairly, reasonably and consistently, implement the engagement policy.</li> <li>Know how students learn and how to teach them effectively.</li> <li>Know the content they teach.</li> <li>Know their students.</li> <li>Plan and assess for effective learning.</li> <li>Create and maintain safe and challenging learning environments.</li> <li>use a range of teaching strategies and resources to engage students in effective learning.</li> </ul>

**4. Shared expectations**

Effective schools share high expectations for the whole-school community. Shared expectations are:

- jointly negotiated, owned and implemented by all members of the school community, including students
- clear and specific
- focused on positive and pro-social behaviours
- focused on prevention and early intervention
- supported by relevant procedures
- consistent, fair and reasonable
- linked to appropriate actions and consequences.

**Schools – principals, teachers and school staff**

Schools have a responsibility to provide an educational environment that ensures that all

students are valued and cared for, feel they are part of the school, and can engage effectively in their learning and experience success.

The school's values are based on the Australian Government's nine values, for Australian schools, which are:

- **Care and Compassion**  
Care for self and others
- **Integrity**  
Act in accordance with principles of moral and ethical conduct, ensure consistency between words and deeds
- **Doing Your Best**  
Seek to accomplish something worthy and admirable, try hard, pursue excellence
- **Respect** Treat others with consideration and regard, respect another person's point of view
- **Fair Go**  
Pursue and protect the common good where all people are treated fairly for a just society
- **Responsibility**  
Be accountable for one's own actions, resolve differences in constructive, non-violent and peaceful ways, contribute to society and to civic life, take care of the environment
- **Freedom**  
Enjoy all the rights and privileges of Australian citizenship free from unnecessary interference or control, and stand up for the rights of others
- **Understanding, Tolerance and Inclusion**  
Be aware of others and their cultures, accept diversity within a democratic society, being included and including others
- **Honesty and Trustworthiness**  
Be honest, sincere and seek the truth

School expectations include:

- inclusive teaching practices
- accessible educational provision for all students
- parent/carer partnerships and liaison
- community partnerships which engage families and the community in ways that support student achievement and success
- provision of appropriate student services
- development and provision of appropriate, relevant and challenging curriculum that gives students the opportunity to experience success in their learning.

### **Restorative Practices**

The school is committed to the use of restorative practices with students. Restorative Practices:

- are underpinned by student learning and facilitate an environment of safety, trust and connectedness (Bond et al. 2001, Fuller 1999)
- promote awareness of others, responsibility and empathy (Hopkins 2002)
- involve direct and voluntary participation of those affected by misconduct in its resolution (Braithwaite 2001b)
- promote relationship management rather than behaviour management (Cameron & Thorsborne 2001)
- separate the deed from the doer (Marshall et al. 2002)
- are systematic, not situational (Armstrong 2004)
- are concerned with establishing or re-establishing social equality in relationships; that is, relationships in which each person's rights to equal dignity, concern and respect are satisfied (Morrison 2002).

### **Diversity in the school community**

Schools should include information on how they will address and celebrate diversity within their school community.

The school aims to address diversity by:

- maintaining a highly skilled, motivated and energetic workforce who are better able to meet the needs of a diverse school community
- attracting highly skilled and diverse staff making the school a preferred employer
- increasing the range of knowledge, skills and experiences available in the workforce
- enhancing the capacity for effective decision-making due to the greater diversity of perspectives and inputs
- creating more effective work teams due to increased participation levels and an increased capacity to solve problems.

### 5. School actions and consequences

Student engagement, regular attendance and appropriate behaviours are encouraged through the implementation of whole-school strategies supported by targeted and individualised support when required (see Element 1).

When developing actions and consequences, schools must ensure that they are developed in consultation with and agreed on by representatives from the whole-school community, including students. This will foster a cohesive and consistent response to poor attendance and inappropriate behaviour. These actions and consequences should be incremental (a staged response) and should be applied fairly and consistently.

Applying fair and consistent discipline and attendance policies that are collectively agreed on and fairly enforced increases the likelihood that student connection to school is maintained.

Equal emphasis should be placed on issuing positive consequences for meeting high expectations as there is on negative consequences.

Actions and consequences should have an educational role and aim to foster positive relationships and retain the dignity of the student. Actions and consequences that isolate a student from learning should be avoided where possible.

The school actions and consequences section of the School Engagement Policy should be framed in a positive way to encourage students to accept responsibility for their actions, and to participate fully and positively in their educational experience. It is important that schools view exclusions only when all other options have been exhausted or where the wellbeing or safety of another student is at risk.

Student engagement, regular attendance and positive behaviours will be supported through relationship based whole-school and classroom practices, including:

- establishing predictable, fair and democratic classrooms and school environments
- ensuring student participation in the development of classroom and wholeschool expectations
- providing personalised learning programs where appropriate for individual students
- consistently acknowledging all students
- empowering students by creating multiple opportunities for them to take responsibility and be involved in decision-making
- providing physical environments conducive to positive behaviours and effective engagement in learning

Inappropriate behaviours, including irregular attendance, will be responded to through a staged response, including:

- understanding the student's background and needs
- ensuring a clear understanding of expectations by both students and teachers
- providing consistent school and classroom environments
- scaffolding the student's learning program.

Broader support strategies will include:

- involving and supporting the parents/carers,

- involving the student wellbeing coordinator, managed individual pathways or careers coordinators
- tutoring/peer tutoring
- mentoring and/or counselling
- convening student support group meetings – the student support group is an important component of the staged response for students facing difficulty with engagement, attendance or behaviour
- developing individualised flexible learning, behaviour or attendance plans
- providing broader educational programs, for example experiential learning, work education, camps/outdoor education/creative arts
- involving community support agencies.

### Discipline procedures – suspension and expulsion

When considering suspension or expulsion, schools are required to follow the procedures listed in section 4.3 of the DEECD guidelines published in **Effective Schools are Engaging Schools Student Engagement Policy Guidelines**. Appendices 12 to 18 of the guidelines provide flowcharts and proformas for use in suspension and expulsion procedures.

A student may only be excluded from school in situations where all other measures have been implemented without success or where an immediate suspension is the only appropriate course of action in response to the student's behaviour.

Consequences which may be used prior to suspension include:

- Withdrawal of privileges
- Withdrawal from class if a student's behaviour significantly interferes with the rights of other students to learn or the capacity of a teacher to teach a class, that student may be temporarily isolated from regular classroom activities or, in more severe cases, required to leave the classroom for a specified period of time.

Where appropriate, parents/carers should be informed of such withdrawals.

- Detention - teachers may require a student to finish school work that has not been completed in the regular classroom or to undertake additional or new work or duties at a reasonable time and place. No more than half the time allocated for any recess may be used for this work.

Where students are required to undertake school work after school, the time should not exceed forty-five minutes.

The principal should ensure that parents/carers are informed at least the day before the detention. Where family circumstances are such that the completion of after-school work would create undue hardship (for example, where students regularly supervise younger siblings in the absence of parents/carers), the school may choose to negotiate alternative disciplinary measures with parents/carers.

- Convening of a support group (See Effective Schools are Engaging Schools - Student Engagement Policy Guidelines for process required).

## References

Effective Schools are Engaging Schools - Student Engagement Policy Guidelines	<a href="http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/codeofconduct.htm">http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/codeofconduct.htm</a>
School Accountability and	<a href="http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/schoolimprovement/accountability/default.htm">http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/schoolimprovement/accountability/default.htm</a>

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## Student Engagement and Well-Being Policy

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Improvement Framework	
Effective Schools are Engaging Schools	<a href="http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/stuman/wellbeing/segpolicy.pdf">http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/stuman/wellbeing/segpolicy.pdf</a>
Disability Standards for Education	<a href="http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/disability/handbook/legislation.htm">http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/disability/handbook/legislation.htm</a>
Safe Schools	<a href="http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/safety/bullying/default.htm">http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/safety/bullying/default.htm</a> <a href="http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/safety/bullying/cyber/default.htm">http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/safety/bullying/cyber/default.htm</a> <a href="http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/elearningsupportservices/www/default.htm">http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/elearningsupportservices/www/default.htm</a>
Charter of Human Rights	<a href="http://www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/programs/multicultural/tchrcharter.htm">http://www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/programs/multicultural/tchrcharter.htm</a> <a href="http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_act/cohrara2006433/">http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_act/cohrara2006433/</a>
Equal Opportunity Act	<a href="http://www.det.vic.gov.au/hrweb/divequity/eo/eoact.htm">http://www.det.vic.gov.au/hrweb/divequity/eo/eoact.htm</a>
Education and Training Reform Act 2006	<a href="http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/directions/reviewleg.htm">http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/directions/reviewleg.htm</a>
VIT Teacher Code of Conduct	<a href="http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/files/documents/1543_Code-of-Conduct-June-2008.pdf">http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/files/documents/1543_Code-of-Conduct-June-2008.pdf</a>