

STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Port Phillip Specialist School at 9646 0855

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.

Port Phillip 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.

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POLICY

1. School profile

Port Phillip Specialist School (PPSS) is in Port Melbourne, close to the CBD of Melbourne, public transport, recreational facilities including beaches and within walking proximity to retail outlets. PPSS is a solid brick construction built in the 1800s and has undergone capital works in 2023. The facilities

provide a specialised teaching and learning environment to support the needs of students with additional needs. The school has a clearly articulated Vision, Values and Mission, which has guided and informed the process of the school's continuous improvement and development.

PPSS is committed to values of professional excellence, cooperation and respect while embracing diversity. Our environment is creative, accepting, flexible and positive. PPSS believes that all students will develop capabilities, in communication and independence, to the best of their abilities. PPSS supports students to build confidence and demonstrate capabilities in an environment that is respectful and supportive.

Students are drawn from a wide range of suburbs in the South East Region but customarily come from the Municipalities of Port Phillip, Bayside and Stonington. However, a small number of students attend the school from outside the bus zone. The zone comprises a mix of socio-economic groups including a large public housing component and suburbs that are more affluent. Transport to and from school is provided by the Department of Education (DET) to students who live in the transport zone at no cost to parents.

All students have an intellectual disability however; we have an increasing number of students with multiple disabilities. A large percentage of our students have Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and an increasing number within our Early Education Program are visually impaired and/or have multiple disabilities. Enrolments have been between 82 – 96 over the last four years. All school-aged students are funded under the Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD) and are transitioning to Disability Inclusion funding. PPSS is funded by DET to run an Early Education Program for children aged 2.8 – 5 years old. This is provided via an onsite program and an integrated program at Uniting Care Kinder in Port Melbourne. PPSS delivers the Victorian Curriculum Levels F-10 utilising the ABLES Assessment tools and Victorian Early Years Learning and Developmental Framework (VEYLDF).

The school consists of two sub-schools, Junior and Senior Schools and two early education programs. Students are placed within a class group, which will best cater for their individual needs. Learning outcomes are formally reported bi-annually to parents and caregivers. Student Support Groups meet each term to review students' individual goals. PPSS has 52 staff, with a profile of 2 principal class, 2 learning specialist teachers, 14 class teachers, 4 specialists, 20 Education Support Staff 5 therapists, 1 wellbeing staff, 1 IOC and 3 administration staff.

Integrated Services Model

The Integrated Services Model, developed in 2000, continues to be pivotal in meeting student wellbeing. Students are supported to access education to their maximum potential by PPSS supporting their health and well-being needs. Therapists, work in collaboration with the class-based teams to understand students' needs, develop, and implement required support strategies. The Integrated Service Committee continue to meet formally two times each week to address issues arising and manage all students through a case review process. The committee engage with external agencies to support the 'whole child'. Our Social Worker engages with families and community organisations to individually address any non-attendance matters.

Community Involvement

PPSS works hard to involve Parents and the Community at the school. Events such as Family Fun Day end of Term Assembly and The Arts Festival are key points our community come together. Parent Information sessions were held throughout the year with a focus on communicating how education is presented at PPSS, how therapies are integrated into the curriculum and information presented related to NDIS transitions. The students and community at PPSS enjoy a newly redeveloped high quality special education facility. Basic education provisions are funded by DET. Additional facilities such as the Hydrotherapy Pool have been built by parents and the generosity of the broader community. PPSS is moving through a period of development resulting in purpose-built facilities that facilitates teaching and learning in an inclusive environment.

2. School values, philosophy and vision

Child Safe Standards

All children and young people have the right to protection in their best interests. At Port Phillip Specialist School, we consider the health, safety and well-being of all children and young people to be our highest priority. We strive to ensure the safety and well-being of children and young people at our school at all times. We have zero tolerance for child abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns will be treated seriously and consistently. We are committed to creating a safe, respectful and inclusive school environment where all students can be happy, confident and resilient, regardless of their sexual or gender identity, cultural background disability or other circumstances. We take account of the diversity of all children, including the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities and vulnerable children.

PPSS is committed to values of professional excellence, cooperation and respect while embracing diversity. Our environment is creative, accepting, flexible and positive.

PPSS believes that all students will develop capabilities, in communication and independence, to the best of their abilities.

PPSS supports students to build confidence and demonstrate capabilities in an environment that is respectful and supportive.

At Port Phillip Specialist School, we are genuinely invested in our students who are at the heart of all we do.

We are driven by Trust, Collaboration, Compassion and Respect to inspire and empower each other, our students, their families and our whole community.

We hold ourselves accountable to these values and bring passion and joy to our students' learning through our unique and creative approach to delivering the curriculum.

Trust

Trust empowers us all. We trust each other to act and, in turn, we feel trusted to act ourselves.

Collaboration

Collaboration is the essence that drives the actions and interactions across our school community. We work together to support all students.

Compassion

We remain open and willing to feel for others, in order to gain insight into their experiences.

Respect

We respect the diversity of our community and value the ideas and wellbeing of every individual.

3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies

Port Phillip 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:

Whole School (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 to ensure that students are able to choose subjects and programs that are tailored to their interests, strengths and aspirations
- teachers at Port Phillip Specialist School use the Visual and Performing Arts Program and the Victorian Curriculum as 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 Port Phillip 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
- 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 Social Worker, 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
- 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

- all students have an Individual Education Plan and will be referred to our School Mental Health Practitioner for an Educational Needs Assessment
- 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
- 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 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 [LGBTIQ Student Support](#)
- all students in Out of Home Care are supported in accordance with the Department's policy on [Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care](#) including being appointed a Learning Mentor, having an Individual Learning Plan and a Student Support Group (SSG) and being referred to Student Support Services for an Educational Needs Assessment
- students with a disability are supported to be able to engage fully in their learning and school activities in accordance with the Department's policy on [Students with Disability](#), such as through reasonable adjustments to support access to learning programs, consultation with families and where required, student support groups and individual education plans

Individual

- [Student Support Groups](#)
- [Individual Education Plans](#)
- [Program for Students with Disabilities](#)
- *Disability Inclusion funding*
- *Referral to [Orange Door](#), [headsace](#)*

Port Phillip Specialist 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

Port Phillip 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 help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. Port Phillip 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

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

Behavioural expectations of students are grounded in our school's Statement of Values and School Philosophy.

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, Port Phillip 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
- 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 and Training.

The Principal of Port Phillip 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.

7. Engaging with families

Port Phillip 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.

8. Evaluation

Port Phillip 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

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 in student diaries so that it is easily accessible to parents, carers and students
- 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 and Training policies are relevant to this Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy:

- [Attendance](#)
- [Student Engagement](#)
- [Child Safe Standards](#)
- [Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care](#)
- [Students with Disability](#)
- [LGBTIQ Student Support](#)
- [Behaviour - Students](#)
- [Suspensions](#)
- [Expulsions](#)
- [Restraint and Seclusion](#)

The following school policies are also relevant to this Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy:

- Child Safety 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 | June 2023 |
| Consultation | School Council, Consultation Committee, SIT Team – May 2023 |
| Approved by | Principal |
| Next scheduled review date | June 2025 |