



VSC Student Wellbeing & Engagement policy

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Table of Contents

STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY Error! Bookmark not defined.

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Purpose | 1 |
| Scope | 1 |
| Policy | 2 |
| School profile | 2 |
| School values, philosophy and vision | 2 |
| Engagement strategies | 3 |
| Universal..... | 3 |
| Targeted | 6 |
| Individual..... | 7 |
| Identifying students in need of support | 8 |
| Student rights and responsibilities | 8 |
| Student behavioural expectations | 9 |
| Engaging with families | 9 |
| Evaluation | 10 |
| Further information and resources | 10 |
| Review cycle | 10 |

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.

Vermont Secondary College 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 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. The Vermont Secondary College Engagement Policy should be read in concert with other college policy documents to access specific details of our approach. These policies are listed at the end of this policy.

POLICY

School profile

Vermont Secondary College is a large, single campus, co-educational school of approximately 1,400 students with a focus on innovative curriculum, high academic achievement and a broad co-curricular program. Vermont is an outstanding college in supporting students to achieve excellent VCE results allowing access to a tertiary pathway in high numbers.

Our community creates rich and rigorous learning experiences that empower us all to participate with purpose, insight and curiosity.

VSC promotes the achievement of excellence in a learning environment that is safe, caring and accepting of diversity. Our college is committed to the development of life-long learning skills and attitudes that motivate and enable all students to achieve their individual goals and to make a positive contribution to their community.

We recognise that all staff, parents and members of the Vermont Secondary College community have an active role in contributing to the development of all students.

Vermont Secondary College is proud of its status as a high-performing neighbourhood state school. The goal of Vermont Secondary College is to draw on the qualities of the young people at the college and allow them to flourish in areas of strength and to develop in areas of weakness. We strive to support all students to develop the ability to recognise and manage emotions, develop caring and concern for others, make responsible decisions, establish positive relationships, act creatively, engage fully with learning, contribute to community, develop high expectations for self, and handle challenging situations with resilience and respond effectively.

School values, philosophy and vision

Our college motto *Lift up thine eyes* provides the vision of our college community. We aspire to be progressive and optimistic in our endeavours and interactions, constantly open to the improvement of achievement, wellbeing and engagement. Together, we are building the capacity of our community to engage meaningfully and to contribute positively in an increasingly complex world.

The college values of Respect, Integrity and Excellence reflect our college ethos while the VSC Motto, 'Lift Up Thine Eyes', provides the moral purpose, philosophical guidance and academic framework for the college community. We aim to be progressive, forward thinking, positive and optimistic in our endeavours and interactions, constantly striving to improve both our own practice and the outcomes of the students whom we educate.

The VSC Student Engagement Policy has been developed by the VSC Student Engagement and Wellbeing team in consultation with the broader VSC community. It reflects the college's School Strategic Plan and will be reviewed and updated in line with the college's Annual Implementation Plan.

Principle 1 – Maximise access and inclusion Quality universal services for all, with extra effort directed to ensuring education and health and wellbeing services are accessible to, and inclusive of, the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

Principle 2 – Focus on outcomes Health, learning, development and wellbeing outcomes are the focus when designing, delivering, evaluating and improving education and health and wellbeing services.

Principle 3 – Evidence-informed and reflective practice Current and relevant evidence known to be effective in improving outcomes informs policy making and professional practice. Research and evaluation is undertaken to generate evidence and enable effective and reflective practice.

Principle 4 – Holistic approach Collaboration between services and multidisciplinary professional practice is pursued to meet the needs of children, young people and families and their health, wellbeing and learning goals.

Principle 5 – Person-centred and family sensitive practice People are seen in the context of their families and environment and are supported and empowered to lead and sustain healthy lives.

Principle 6 – Partnerships with families and communities Partnerships are forged with children, young people, families and communities, who are seen as partners in the creation of healthy environments and good health and wellbeing.

Principle 7 – Cultural competence Effort is made to understand and effectively communicate with people across cultures and to recognise one's own world view. Cultural connection is recognised as playing an integral part in healthy development and wellbeing.

Principle 8 – Commitment to excellence High expectations are held for every child and young person. Professionals continually assess their own work practices to find opportunities for improvement.

Engagement strategies

Vermont Secondary has developed a range of strategies to promote engagement, positive behaviour and respectful relationships for all students in our school. 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

Vermont Secondary College adopts whole-of-school strategies to promote positive behaviour and inclusion, which include:

- 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
- 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 VCE to ensure that students are able to choose subjects and programs that are tailored to their interests, strengths and aspirations
- teachers at Vermont Secondary College use the Vermont Instructional Model in alignment with FISO 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 Vermont Secondary College 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 is 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 Leadership Program. Students are encouraged to speak with their teachers, Student Manager or Head of House, Assistant Principal and/or Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns.
- create opportunities for cross—age connections amongst students through school production, athletics and music programs
- All students are welcome to self-refer to the Student Wellbeing team, ~~Coordinator~~, Heads of House and Student Managers, 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
 - BeYou
 - Safe Schools
- programs, incursions and excursions developed through our Building Capacity program to address issue specific behaviour (i.e. anger management programs,)
- opportunities for student inclusion (i.e. sports teams, clubs, recess and lunchtime activities)

The college participates in several whole-school programs that promote engagement and wellbeing at VSC.

Building Capacity Program

The **Building Capacity Program** at VSC responds to and is informed by the following national and/or state policies:

- The National Safe Schools Framework
- The Respectful Relationships Curriculum
- National Professional Standards for Teachers
- Victorian Curriculum

The program is informed by the following curricula/resources:

- Victorian Curriculum
- Personal and Social Capabilities (VCAA)
- Mind Matters (Australian Government Department of Health)
- Respectful Relationships Curriculum
- BeYou National Framework

The Building Capacity approach presents in different guises in different levels. Broadly, the approach can be understood to inform the following:

- The College's House Structure Years 7 – 12

- The College's approach to Student Services, Inclusion and the Program for Students with Disability
- College Camps Years 7 – 12
- Personal and Social Capabilities (formerly known as Social and Emotional Learning Program) Year 7 – 8
- Building Capacity Programs Year 7 – 12
- Senior Programs – VCE (Pathways)
- Vic Curriculum General Capabilities

Respectful Relationships, Restorative Practices and the Vermont Values

The school is committed to the use of restorative practices with students. All relationships between students and staff should be informed by this ethic and all conflicts that arise should be dealt with primarily using a restorative practices framework.

Restorative Practices:

- are underpinned by student learning and facilitate an environment of safety, trust and connectedness
- promote awareness of others, responsibility and empathy
- involve direct and voluntary participation of those affected by misconduct in its resolution
- promote relationship management rather than behaviour management
- separate the deed from the doer
- are systematic, not situational
- 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)

All House staff are trained in Restorative Practices as are a large number of teaching staff.

House model

The House Model at Vermont Secondary College provides a framework for the provision of student learning, support and intervention services as well as student leadership and to promote a sense of community. The structure consists of three Houses: Hotham, Macedon and Stirling.

Within each House there is a House Management Team:

- An Assistant Principal
- A Head of House
- A Student Manager at each of Years 7, 8 & 9
- Two Student Managers at Years 10-12

These teams are supported as required by the Student Wellbeing and Pathways & Transitions teams.

The role of the House Management team and in particular the Student Manager is to provide the smooth daily operation of each year level House group and to create a cohesive, harmonious, productive and orderly House and college climate. Student Managers look after the general well-being of House students at the year level, have a highly visible presence, implementing the standards and procedures within the college, and are the first port-of-call in communicating with student families. This model of Student Management ensures consistency with students and families as they move through the College.

The House system also provides a way for staff to be aligned in terms of teaching and co-curricular programs, with many staff in the junior school teaching within their House. Students participate in a range of curricular and co-curricular programs and within the House such as:

- Camps
- Sport (Swimming and Athletics carnivals)
- Performing Arts (Talent Show & Theatre Sports)
- Community Focus Days
- Debating
- Year level activity and curriculum-focused activity days
- Targeted student wellbeing programs and initiatives

As well as this there is a vibrant Student Leadership structure that allows for student voice across all levels of the school. Within and outside of this structure students are involved in numerous leadership initiatives that include:

- Student Leadership Forum
- Social Justice and Community-focused groups
- House Community Focus Days

Student Leadership Structure

In 2010, in conjunction with the development of the House Model, a Student Leadership structure was developed. A formal structure was created that aligned with the model with each House having leaders at each level. The model was then reviewed in 2014. It was felt it was important to have a strong and vibrant Student Leadership at VSC as:

- Developing student voice and agency is paramount
- Building the leadership capacity and voice of young people is an integral part of the overall wellbeing and connectedness of students at Vermont SC.
- There is need for student leadership to focus on building the capacity of our young people as leaders and global citizens. This requires Student Leaders and Student Leadership Programs to uphold the Vermont Values and be exemplars for the student body as a whole.
- There is a real need to develop in young people an inherent sense of community, volunteerism, civics and citizenship through leadership programs within the school and wider community.
- There is a need to build the capacity of staff to enable the young people in the school to have voice and agency and to show leadership through a range of curricular and co-curricular programs.
- The school must enable students to be active in decision-making within the college through House leadership, leadership within clubs and groups and recognize these activities and events as leadership.

Targeted

- Each student is assigned a House and within this, each student has a Student Manager, who monitor the health and wellbeing of students in their House, and act as a point of contact for students who may need additional support
- all students from Year 10 and above will be assisted by the Pathways and Transition teams to plan for their future
- connect all Koorie students with a Koorie Engagement Support Officer
- all students in Out of Home Care will be appointed a Learning Mentor (most likely their Student Manager or a Wellbeing staff member), have an Individual Learning Plan where

needed and will be referred to Student Support Services for an Educational Needs Assessment

- House, 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. This is done through the Building Capacity Program which targets cohort specific needs within year levels, classrooms, groups and individuals.
- staff will apply a trauma-informed approach to working with students who have experienced trauma
- Regular meetings with Transition teams to discuss case management for specific Houses and year levels
- Targeted interventions about specific behaviour with the involvement of community services such as the Youth Resource Officer, Headspace, EACH and organisations within the community who assist with youth mental health.

Individual

- Student Support Groups are conducted for students who are identified as needing extra support, either those who have a disability or are requiring ongoing wellbeing support. Students who are part of our inclusion program will have regular SSGs as well as students with OoHc status (mandated) or refugee status (if required and/or willing).
- Individual Learning Plan, Behaviour Support Plans and Support Plans will be developed for students when required. These will be monitored regularly with input from the relevant team members, family members and the student.
- Program for Students with Disabilities
- referral to Student Wellbeing team and Student Support Services
- referral to ChildFirst, Headspace
- Lookout

Vermont Secondary College 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, Support Plans 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 Refresh or Renew as well as community schools such as The Pines.

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
- running regular Student Support Group meetings for all students:
 - with a disability
 - in Out of Home Care
 - and with other complex needs that require ongoing support and monitoring.

Identifying students in need of support

Vermont Secondary College is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. The House and Student Wellbeing team plays a significant role in developing and implementing strategies that help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. Vermont Secondary College 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, 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.

Working Party note: RELATE TO VALUES - Expected behaviours work

Student behavioural expectations

Behavioural expectations of students, staff and families are grounded in our school's Statement of Values. Student bullying behaviour will be responded to consistently with Vermont Secondary College's Bullying Prevention policy.

When a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our school community, Vermont Secondary College 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.

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: (refer infractions process)

- 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 House or Wellbeing team
- restorative practices
- detentions
- behaviour reviews including behaviour cards
- suspension
- expulsion

Suspension and expulsion are measures of last resort and may only be used in particular situations consistent with Department policy, available at:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/participation/pages/engagement.aspx>

Corporal punishment is prohibited in our school and will not be used in any circumstance.

Engaging with families

Vermont Secondary College 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
- providing parent volunteer opportunities so that families can contribute to school activities
- involving families with home learning 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

Vermont Secondary College 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
- SOCS

Further information and resources

- Bullying Prevention Policy (2019)
- Child Safe Standards
- Emergency and Critical Incident Policy (2019)
- Gender Diversity Procedures and Policy (2019)
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy (2019)
- Mobile Device, Computer and Internet Acceptable Use Policy
- Statement of Values and School Philosophy (2019)
- Student Code of Conduct (2016)
- School Attendance Policy (2019)
- VSC Classroom Relationships (2016)

Review cycle

This policy was last updated in December 2019 and is scheduled for review in 2022.

Working Party note: insert VRQA reference table.