



Bendigo Special Developmental School

Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy



HELP FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Bendigo Special Developmental School on 03 5447 3267 or bendigo.sds@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.

Bendigo Special Developmental 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

The Bendigo Special Developmental School provides education programs for school aged students 5 to 18 with a moderate to severe intellectual disability. Our students reside in the Bendigo Region encompassing Kyneton, Wedderburn, Heathcote and Huntly. The current enrolment is 160 students.

DET and VCAA curriculum guidelines are followed at the school, with all students being taught seven subjects and the four capabilities of the Victorian Curriculum (the school is exempt from teaching languages). The Victorian Teaching and Learning Model 2.0, coupled with the Science of Reading and the Science of Mathematics is used to design and implement an individualised education plan (IEP) for each student, co designed with their parents/carers and possible external NDIS professionals during regular Student Support Group (SSG) meetings. Staff work in Professional Learning Communities to collaboratively plan and moderate student learning and achievement. Providing a voice for all students through their individualised communication system is paramount to their successful engagement in learning.

Classroom spaces encompass both permanent and portable buildings and learning is supported by an extensive range of educational equipment and communication aids. Bendigo Special Developmental School is currently in Stage 1 of a 4 stage rebuild process, with the first stage of this rebuild due to be finished in October 2025. A hydrotherapy pool, multipurpose room, student kitchen, truncated bicycle track with a range of adapted bicycles, coupled with a specialist subjects areas of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics), Health and Physical Education including swimming and water safety instruction, Music and the Dramatic Arts, Visual Arts, Humanities, Digital Technologies, SWPBS(School Wide Positive Behaviour Support) and RRRR(Rights Resilience and Respectful Relationships) enrich programs. Student health and safety is paramount, and a secure and stimulating outdoor environment, with challenging play equipment and shadeport sun protection provide play and regulation experiences for the students.

The school has been officially gifted the name 'Manya' meaning 'Meeting Site' by the elders of the traditional land owners, the Dja Dja Wurrung, for the outdoor space located at the north end of the school. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives are embedded within the curriculum and the school celebrates all forms of diversity within our community including the neurodiversity, cultural, gender, sexual, racial and religious identities of students and their families.

Teamwork and communication between staff and parents is a priority. Student Support Group meetings are held each term and support the preparation and review of the Individual Education Plan. Parent and caregiver dialogue is supported by fortnightly newsletters, a Facebook page, and daily communication through a digital app. Learning programs are additionally supported by the school's physiotherapist, two speech therapists, Family Support Teacher and Mental Health Practitioner.

Several students are dual enrolled in mainstream schools for varying time fractions. Cooperative planning and programming between both educational settings and continual review and support of student progress are essential elements of the success and extension of these programs.

As a recognised resource for special education, the school provides an information, consultancy and professional development base for teachers, parents, tertiary students and other people involved in the disability field.

This school is committed to respecting the dignity of the individual and providing students with disabilities with maximum opportunity to extend their academic, intellectual, physical, social and emotional development in a safe and positive environment.

2. School values, philosophy and vision

Bendigo Special Developmental School's Statement of Values and School Philosophy is integral to the work that we do and is the foundation of our school community. Students, staff and members of our school community are encouraged to live and demonstrate our vision and core values at every opportunity.

Our school's vision is "A place of excellence in education that creates inclusive communities and success for all."

Our values are:

- Driving learning growth
- Uniting to achieve excellence
- Valuing diversity with kindness and respect
- Ensuring equity of opportunity

3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies

Bendigo Special Developmental 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 through a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework. We ensure that each student has the level of support they need to access and engage in all areas of the curriculum and the schooling environment.

We acknowledge that our students require individual social, emotional and educational support whilst at school, and that the needs of students will change over time as they grow and learn.

A summary of the MTSS supports including Tier 1 universal (whole of school), Tier 2 (targeted groups) and Tier 3 (individual engagement strategies) used by our school are included below:

Universal

- High and consistent expectations of all staff, students and parents and carers
- Prioritising 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
- Ensuring all students have access to a recognised and functional form of communication
- School Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) whole school expectations including the explicit instruction of the school's mantras of *Act Safely, Show Respect, Be Your Best*
- Positive behaviour and student achievement if acknowledged in the classroom and in all school settings using the SWPBS acknowledgement system. Student achievements are further acknowledged in school assemblies, in the newsletter, on the school website and social media platforms and in communication to families
- Teachers at Bendigo Special Developmental School use the Victorian Teaching Learning Model 2.0 to ensure an explicit, common and shared model of instruction to ensure that evidenced-based, high yield teaching practices are incorporated into all lessons
- Our school's Statement of Vision, Values and mantras 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
- Teachers deliver a broad curriculum including Strengthened Career Education to ensure that students are able to choose pathways and programs that are tailored to their interests, strengths and aspirations
- Carefully planned transition programs support students moving into our school, through different stages of their schooling and for those exiting our school into post school options
- Monitoring 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 Team Students are also encouraged to speak with their teachers, the leadership team, the Mental Health Practitioner or Assistant Principal and Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns.
- Creating opportunities for cross-age connections amongst students through school plays, athletics, music programs, incursions, excursions and whole school celebrations

- All students are welcome to self-refer to the Mental Health Practitioner, classroom teacher, education support staff, leadership team, 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 and practices such as:
 - Respectful Relationships
 - Safe Schools
 - Zones of Regulation
 - Explicit use, teaching and modelling of PODD (Pragmatic Organised Dynamic display) books
 - Use of identified and authorised tier 1 visuals
- Measures are in place to empower our school community to identify, report and address inappropriate and harmful behaviours such as racism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination or harassment.

Targeted

- Koorie students are supported to engage fully in their education, in a positive learning environment that understands and appreciates the strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture – refer to our Child Safe Standards Risk Register – Child Safety Standard [insert link]
- All cultural and linguistically diverse students are supported to feel safe and included in our school including through celebration of their culture, access to interpreters for their families if needed and working in partnership with community organisations
- We provide a positive and respectful learning environment for our students and families 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 supported by the LOOKOUT Champion and an 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 and their families graduating are assisted to plan their transition into post school options by reviewing their NDIS plan, having transition visits to support providers and further education providers and work experience opportunities
- The SWPBS Leadership team analyse and design boost lessons for target cohorts
- PLC teams analyse and design boost lessons for target cohorts
- Staff apply a trauma-informed approach to working with students who have experienced trauma including those from a refugee background
- Students enrolled under the Department's international student program are supported in accordance with our legal obligations and Department policy and guidelines at: [International Student Program](#)
- 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

Individual

Bendigo Special Developmental School implements a range of strategies that support and promote individual engagement. These can include:

- Building constructive relationships with students
- Meeting with student and their parent/carer to talk about how best to help the student engage with school
- Developing a Behaviour Support Plan, Safety Plan, Behaviour Intervention Plan, Risk Assessment Management Plan (RAMP), Cultural Plan, Medical Action Plan, Health 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 including MHP, MHWAT or the Wellbeing Team
 - 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
- having an open and caring school environment that welcomes parents and carers at any time

4. Identifying students in need of support

Bendigo Special Developmental School is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. The PLC and Wellbeing team plays a significant role in developing and implementing strategies help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. Bendigo Special Developmental 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 data
- engagement with families
- self-referrals or referrals from peers
- Sentral/SWPBS data
- personal, health and learning information gathered by the Family Support Teacher, NDIS Navigator, MHP, teacher or external agencies

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 vision statement, values and mantras outline the rights and responsibilities of members of our community.

Students have the right to:

- participate fully in their education
- have access to the curriculum utilising any supports necessary to do so
- 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
- communicate their needs, wants and feelings
- have access to communications supports at all times in all school settings

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 vision, values and mantras.

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 the Bullying Prevention policy. [insert link]

When a student at Bendigo Special Developmental School is not displaying behaviours in accordance with our SWPBS mantras, *Act Safely, Show Respect, Be Your Best*, then staff and the school will respond after considering each incident on an individual level.

Our school considers, explores and implement positive and non-punitive interventions to support student behaviour in combination with other engagement and support strategies that ensure that factors that may have attributed to the student's presentation of behaviour are identified and addressed specifically.

Responses to these behaviours may include:

- Explicit teaching of the SWPBS expected behaviour
- Referring the student to internal support pathways as detailed above in the targeted and individual MTSS strategies
- Updating the student's IEP

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.

The Principal of Bendigo Special Developmental 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

Bendigo Special Developmental 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 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

Bendigo Special Developmental 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

Bendigo Special Developmental School will also regularly monitor available data dashboards to ensure any wellbeing or engagement issues are acted upon in a timely manner and any intervention occurs as soon as possible.

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in staff induction processes
- 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/carer 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 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

Policy last reviewed	October 2024
Consultation	Endorsed by School Council on 21 st October 2024 Endorsed by the Consultative Committee on 22 nd October 2024
Approved by	Principal, Kirshy McAinch on 22 nd October 2024
Next scheduled review date	October 2026