

LATROBE SPECIAL DEVELOPMENTAL SCHOOL

STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY



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.

Latrobe 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 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

Latrobe SDS is the only school that provides a comprehensive curriculum for students with moderate to severe intellectual and associated disabilities between the ages of 4.8 and 18 years who reside in Latrobe City. The school is located in Traralgon and has an enrolment for 2019 of 75 students. The school currently has a number of economically disadvantaged students with an SFO (Student Family Occupation) index of 0.6087. The school is committed to providing a centre of excellence in the Special Education field within the Latrobe Valley network and wider Gippsland Region.

Latrobe SDS provides a specialised and challenging education in a safe and supportive environment where independence is encouraged in order to lead to fulfilling lives where students are valued members of society. The school's motto is "Towards Independence." Personal independence and a valued lifestyle is strongly promoted for students. Latrobe SDS develops collaborative partnerships with all members of the school and wider community for the benefit of its students.

The core values of Show Respect, Act Safely and Try Your Best, and a Positive Learning Environment are the central component to the School Values Wheel developed to promote pride in our school. These values are central to the work undertaken in the school on a daily basis.

Teaching and learning takes place in a specialist setting that is well equipped to meet our students multiply disabilities. The class rooms are surrounded by sensory and attractive gardens, shaded specialist playing and outdoor seating areas. The School has multi-sensory rooms, a Hydrotherapy Spa and Interactive Whiteboards in all classes. All students at the school have an Individual Learning Plan which is developed in consultation with families, the student and school staff including the teacher and Allied Health team. The school prides itself on the life skills and communication programs implemented for the students. Families are well supported by the School Chaplain and staff through offers of assistance to source appropriate agencies services for their child. The school focuses strongly on the School Wide Positive Behaviour Support program and teaching of expected behaviours – Show Respect, Act Safely and Try Our Best.

We strive to provide a nurturing and challenging environment that empowers students to reach their personal best, both academically and socially.

2. School values, philosophy and vision

Latrobe 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 core values of show respect, act safely and try your best at every opportunity.

SCHOOL VISION

We want to make our students the heroes of our school.

SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

To create a safe, respectful and evidence-based learning environment where a diversity of student learners feel included, valued, happy, are actively engaged, challenged and supported to achieve success.

SCHOOL MOTTO

Towards Independence

3. Engagement strategies

Latrobe Special Developmental School 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

- 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
- Teachers at Latrobe Special Developmental 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 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
- Students have the opportunity to contribute to and provide feedback on decisions about school operations through the Student Leadership Group. Students are also encouraged to speak with their teachers, ES staff, Assistant Principal and Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns.
- All students are welcome to self-refer to the School Chaplain, 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
 - Bully Stoppers
 - Safe Schools
- Programs, incursions and excursions developed to address issue specific behaviour (i.e. anger management programs)
- Opportunities for student inclusion (i.e. sports teams, clubs, recess and lunchtime activities)

Targeted

Student engagement and wellbeing is the responsibility of all members of staff at Latrobe Special Developmental School. Teachers who provide the central relationship with students are supported by a range of student wellbeing and support staff alongside community partnerships with other agencies. We have pathways staff to assist classroom teachers in developing individual pathway plans during transition. Our staff seek to improve the physical, emotional, cognitive and environmental aspects of students' lives in order to support them to live fulfilling lives and reach their full learning potential. We do this by seeking an extensive professional learning culture of coaching, mentoring, briefings, meetings invited speakers and external professional learning consultants to ensure that students' health and wellbeing remains paramount.

At Latrobe Special Developmental School we identify students with current or emerging mental health and learning issues so that we can provide preventative and early intervention approaches where possible. Teachers are supported through the child safety standards and mental health awareness and trauma training to recognise early concerns. Preliminary assessment of our students overall distress and prosocial behaviours are conducted for all students. Protocols exist to facilitate support, referrals and family engagement. We also actively build on students' help seeking skills.

Our intensive intake system provides a comprehensive developmental history and assessment for every student. The school is then able to develop a holistic approach to management of our students and their families. Our daily briefings include all staff members to help support and monitor students and the regular professionals meetings contribute to stronger community partnerships and inclusive coordination and planning of services around the student and their families.

Maintaining an outstanding education for all of our students also requires the school to support a high level of professional learning for all staff. Staff participate in professional learning daily, in teaching and learning and student wellbeing meetings, briefings, in teams and individually through coaching, mentoring, modelling, through consultation and with guest speakers within the Performance and Development accreditation guidelines.

Other targeted supports include:

- Each unit has an appointed Unit Leader who monitors the health and wellbeing of students in their unit, and act as a point of contact for students who may need additional support
- Connecting all Koorie students with a Koorie Engagement Support Officer
- All students in Out of Home Care will be appointed a Learning Mentor, have an Individual Learning Plan and will be referred to Student Support Services for an Educational Needs Assessment
- Wellbeing and Allied 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

Individual

Latrobe Special Developmental School implements a range of strategies that support and promote individual engagement.

Students are linked into other agencies when they require support and Student Support Groups are conducted for all students. Our teachers provide a pivotal role in determining individual student's wellbeing and subsequent referral.

Recognizing that our students may lack the necessary skills to develop a strong sense of self, our school is committed to enhancing student's resilience and confidence through the acknowledgement and celebration of success in their learning as well as the positive relationships and connections they make within the school and outside school.

Student knowledge and capacity is developed by:

- Having high expectations for every student to reach their individual learning goals
- Challenging our students to be responsible and accountable
- Matching teaching strategies/approaches to students interests and prior learning
- Being explicit about purposeful, authentic numeracy and literacy learning

We achieve this by:

- Developing a deep understanding of numeracy and literacy content and teaching strategies
- Having strong on-going assessment and evaluation practices that incorporate constructive feedback to our students
- Monitoring and analysing student learning using evidence-based assessment tools and data
- Embedding the school's strategic planning within an effective, continuous improvement cycle

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 Child First
 - 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
- Running regular Student Support Group meetings for all students.

4. Identifying students in need of support

Latrobe Special Developmental 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. Latrobe 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, SWIS, 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, 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.

6. 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 Latrobe Special Developmental School's Bullying policy.

When a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our school community, Latrobe Special Developmental School 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:

- 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
- Restorative practices
- Detentions
- Behaviour reviews
- Suspension
- Expulsion

Suspension and expulsion are measures of last resort and may only be used in particular situations consistent with Department policy, available at: <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/suspensions/policy>

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

7. Engaging with families

Latrobe 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 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

Latrobe 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 (SWIS)
- School reports
- Parent survey
- Case management
- CASES21
- SOCS

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- Statement of Values and School Philosophy
- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Child Safe Standards

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last updated in February 2020 and is scheduled for review in February 2022.

This policy was ratified by the Latrobe Special Developmental School Council in February 2020

Signed: _____
Principal
Nicole Herbert

Signed: _____
School Council President
Sam Varsaci