

STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY



Help for non-English speakers.

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Dandenong Valley SDS on 9704 4800.

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.

Dandenong Valley SDS 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

Dandenong Valley SDS is a specialist school serving the needs of students aged from pre-school (2.8 - 4.8) to 18 years, with moderate to profound intellectual disabilities including physical, sensory, behavioural, medical and communication disabilities.

Situated in the SE growth corridor, one of the fastest growing areas of Melbourne the school has a growing enrolment of approximately 161 (EFT) plus 39 Early Education students in 2025. Seventy percent of these students are male. Many of our students travel to and from school on contract buses. Our school is culturally diverse with 26.8% of our families having a language background other than English (LOTE), with most families speaking languages such as Dari, Hazaragi and Arabic. The school also has a family that represents the Koorie community. We are proud of our diversity and inclusive community.

2. School values, philosophy, and vision

Dandenong Valley SDS'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 respect, integrity, and responsibility at every opportunity.

Our school's vision is to provide the best educational outcomes for children and young people with disabilities.

Our Statement of Values is available online at: <https://www.dandyvalley.vic.edu.au/>

Engagement strategies

Dandenong Valley SDS 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, 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 inclusive of Victorian levels Foundation A -D to ensure activities are tailored to interests, strengths, and abilities of the students.
- teachers at Dandenong Valley SDS use an Explicit Teaching instructional model to ensure to ensure that evidenced-based, high yield teaching practices are incorporated into all lessons.

- teachers at Dandenong Valley SDS 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
- 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.
- All students are welcome to self-refer to the 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 a school wide Social Emotional Learning program with our staff and students, which includes programs such as:
 - Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships
 - School Wide Positive Behaviour Support
 - Personal Social Capabilities
 - Critical and Creative Thinking
 - Health and Physical Education – Personal, Social and Community Health
- programs, incursions, and excursions developed to address issue specific behaviour (i.e., anger management programs)
- opportunities for student inclusion

Targeted

- Class teachers will monitor the health and wellbeing of each student and refer them to Prin team if required.
- Students in the last two years of their schooling will participate in a senior transition program in readiness for post school options.
- 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.
- all cultural and linguistically diverse students are supported to feel safe and included in our school.
- 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 \[insert any specific measures at your school to support LGBTIQ+ students\]](#)
- 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
- 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.

Individual

- Individual Education Plans
- Student Behaviour Snapshot/Behaviour Support Plans
- Student Support Groups will be offered at least 4 times a year.
- Referral to Student Support Services as needed.
- Referral to Orange Door /Headspace
- Lookout input

Dandenong Valley SDS 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 individual profiles as needed for: communication, sensory needs, health.
- developing an Individual Education 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 Orange Door

Where necessary the school will support the student's family to engage by:

- being responsive and sensitive to changes in the student's circumstances, 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

3. Identifying students in need of support

Dandenong Valley SDS is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally, and socially. The class staff, therapists and Principal team play a significant role in developing and implementing strategies help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. Dandenong Valley SDS 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
- information from outside providers

4. 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.
- have access to and participate in a full, relevant, and challenging curriculum.
- 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.

5. Student behavioural expectations and management

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 Dandenong Valley SDS Bullying policy.

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.

When a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our school community, Dandenong Valley SDS 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:

- Communicating with a student that their behaviour is inappropriate.
- Redirection
- Addressing the trigger
- Teacher controlled consequences such as moving a student in a classroom or other reasonable and proportionate responses.
- Consequences for actions: e.g., off the yard for a period
- Restorative practices
- Team around the Child meetings
- Behaviour reviews (Behaviour Support Plans)

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 Dandenong Valley SDS is responsible for ensuring all suspensions and expulsions are recorded on CASES21.

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

6. Engaging with families

Dandenong Valley SDS 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 parents opportunities to attend and 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.

Evaluation

Dandenong Valley SDS 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

Dandenong Valley SDS 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:

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

All of our policies can be found on the [Dandenong Valley SDS school website](#)

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	November 2025
Consultation	Senior Management Team School Council
Approved by	Principal – Rhonda Rawlings
Next scheduled review date	November 2027