

STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact the school office on 9496 5324.

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.

The Austin 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 Austin School is a P-12 School that provides specialised educational programs for children and young people who are patients of Austin Health and Austin Child and Youth Mental Health Service (ICYMHS). The School is located within the grounds of Austin Hospital in Heidelberg. The school's

facilities are located in an attractive garden setting where students have access to an outdoor area for recreation and socialisation. Most programs take place within the relocatable school buildings provided by the Department of Education; however, teachers also work with students within the Paediatric Ward, Royal Talbot and the inpatient units within the Marion Drummond Building.

Students *must* be referred to the School by clinical staff of Austin Health and Austin ICYMHS. Student referrals come from the Austin ICYMHS, either inpatient or outpatient teams, the Paediatric Ward (2 West) or Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Hospital. All students have a physical and/or mental health diagnosis. Mental health diagnosis may include psychiatric, emotional or behavioural issues. Physical health problems may include eating disorders, spinal injuries, acquired brain injury, neurological conditions, liver and renal disease, chronic fatigue syndrome and a range of other medical conditions. The school is in a growth corridor which means the number of school age students within our zone will continue to increase.

There are places for 56 students. Students attend on a full-time and part-time capacity. In total 14.2 effective full time (EFT) school teaching staff may see up to 450-500 students who are enrolled during the year. Outpatient programs are conducted on a school term basis, whilst the length of each inpatient admission will vary from a few days to a few months. Some students are supported within the community in an outreach capacity. A number of students may need to be re-enrolled due to their illness.

Staff work in multidisciplinary teams with Austin ICYMHS/Austin Health inpatient and outpatient clinical teams to support the work of the teachers. Due to our association with the Austin ICYMHS and Austin Health the school is constantly required to review and adjust service models. Referral to Austin ICYMHS services has continued to rise.

Given the transient nature of the school population and the fact that most students return to their base school, Individual Education Plans are formulated for the majority of students, with a focus on English and Personal and Social capabilities. Our programs support students' social and emotional learning and focus on building their self awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making. The Austin School provides an educational intervention program designed to re-engage or maintain students with the learning process.

2. School values, philosophy and vision

The Austin School is committed to providing a safe, supportive and inclusive environment for all students, staff and members of our community. Our school recognises the importance of the partnership between our school and parents and carers to support student learning, engagement and wellbeing. We share a commitment to, and a responsibility for, creating an inclusive and safe school environment for our students.

The Austin 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 being Respectful, Inclusive and Curious at every opportunity.

Our school's vision is to empower students to engage in a safe and supportive learning environment that will enhance social and emotional skills, relationships and support their transition to education and vocation.

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

3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies

The Austin 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 (program 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 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 participate in programs that are tailored to their interests, strengths and aspirations including different subjects, VET programs, VCE and VCAL (where appropriate)
- teachers at The Austin School use 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 The Austin 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 communicated to parents, and wider team around the learner including clinician, home school and other agencies (where relevant)
- 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 forums including program-based meetings and feedback sessions. Students are also encouraged to speak with their teachers, program Leader, Assistant Principal and Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns
- create opportunities for cross—age connections amongst students through secondary health program, incursions, sport programs

- all students are welcome to self-refer to the Program Leader, 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 needs or behaviour (i.e. anxiety and school disengagement)
- opportunities for student inclusion (i.e. recess and lunchtime activities)
- 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

- program teachers monitor the health and wellbeing of students in their program, and act as a point of contact for students who may need additional support
- 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 including through culturally aware staff and programs and use of interpreters where required
- 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 education plan and a Student Support Group (SSG)
- 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

- each student has a teacher and a clinician/ case manager, who monitor the health and wellbeing and act as a point of contact for students if they need additional support
- Student Support Groups
- Individual Education Plan and Behaviour Support Plan

- Program for Students with Disabilities
- referral to Student Support Services
- referral to Orange Door, [headspace](#)
- [Mental health toolkit](#)
- [Navigator](#)
- [LOOKOUT](#)

The Austin School implements a range of strategies that support and promote individual engagement. These can include:

- working with Austin Health and ICYMHS
- building constructive relationships with students at risk or students who are vulnerable due to complex individual circumstances
- meeting with student, their parent/carer, clinicians, schools and other relevant agencies to talk about how best to help the student engage with school
- developing an Individual Education Plan and/or a Behaviour Support Plan
- supporting schools to develop an Individual Education Plan, Safety 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:
 - Student Support Services
 - Appropriate external supports such as council based youth and family services, other allied health professionals, headspace or Orange Door
 - Re-engagement programs such as Navigator, alternate settings, other educational and vocational pathways

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.

4. Identifying students in need of support

The Austin School is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. Each program plays a significant role in developing and implementing strategies to help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. The Austin School will utilise the following information and tools to identify students in need of extra emotional, social or educational support:

- Austin Health/ ICYMHS student referral form, handover and other student focused meetings
- 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 and Tier 2 and 3 data
- engagement with families
- self-referrals or referrals from peers
- Student Support Group meetings.

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:

- be curious with their learning
- 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
- work towards understanding and managing emotions
- grow through learning, perseverance and reflection
- understand their own strengths, skills and interests.

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 and management

Behavioural expectations of students are grounded in our school's Statement of Values We engage in school wide positive behaviour support with our staff and students. The school behaviour matrix identifies accepted behaviours of our values in action. The school has also identified behaviours of concerns and supports these within three tiers.

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, The Austin 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 implements positive and non-punitive interventions to support student behaviour before considering disciplinary measures such as 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 speaking calmly with student one on one
- student encouraged to make a positive choice
- student encouraged to take time out in classroom/ another appropriate space
- student redirected to an alternative activity
- student encouraged to self soothe using appropriate sensory strategy
- unit/ clinician informed and support provided (if possible)
- return to unit or have appointment with clinician
- reflection sheet to allow student to take responsibility for action and to repair damage to people/relationship or property
- appropriate consequences applied in consultation with multidisciplinary team
- case review/Student support group meeting
- teacher controlled consequences such as moving a student within a classroom or other reasonable and proportionate responses to misbehaviour
- withdrawal of privileges
- restorative practices
- 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 The Austin 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

The Austin 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
- 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

The Austin 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

The Austin 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
- 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 Policy
- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Statement of Values and School Philosophy

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	June 2025
Consultation	School Council – 16/06/25 Staff – 16/06/2025 School Community via website – 17/06/2025
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	June 2027