

Student Engagement Policy

20 April 2019



**VIRTUAL
SCHOOL VICTORIA**

School Profile

Virtual School Victoria is the state's leading virtual school, offering around 135 courses online, including VCE subjects. With an annual enrolment in excess of 3500 students from Foundation to Year 12, VSV is one of the largest state government schools in Victoria. Around 1500 students are enrolled full time with a further 2000 students, most in years 11 and 12, completing one or two subjects with us whilst based in other schools. The VSV student cohort is both diverse and unique. We provide education to:

- school-based students who do not have access to the courses they need in their own school
- children and young people with chronic physical and mental health circumstances that make it difficult for them to attend mainstream schooling
- children and young people involved elite level sports and performing arts
- children and young people who are travelling within Victoria, around Australia or overseas
- young adults wishing to complete their education in a way that they find engaging
- rural and regional children and young people who, due to distance, cannot attend a local school.

Our vision is to see the VSV as a system leader in online, virtual and blended learning; our aspiration for excellence will be realised through the implementation of key improvement strategies that support the achievement of the following goals:

- *All VSV students will be creative and curious learners, critical thinkers, make significant progress regardless of their starting point and achieve high standards of literacy and numeracy.*
- *All VSV students will be motivated and engaged learners.*
- *All VSV students will be confident and resilient learners. (School Strategic Plan 2014 – 2018)*

Values and Vision

VSV is a unique and vibrant learning community that facilitates lifelong learning. This is captured in our motto: *Flexible Learning for All* and is at the core in our values: Respect, Empathy, Collaboration and Growth. VSV delivers a range of programs and uses various strategies to promote student engagement and participation by encouraging a sense of belonging and connectedness.

VSV provides innovative 21st century learning in a stimulating, inclusive and supportive learning environment that aims to engage all students and inspires them in the pursuit of their best to achieve their individual learning goals. This is achieved by:

- showing *respect* for self and others
- developing a sense of *pride* and self-esteem
- having the upmost *integrity* in everything we say and do
- showing reciprocity; *trusting* and being trusted
- taking *responsibility* for self, others, the community and the environment
- providing *equal opportunity* that nurtures and empowers each individual
- demonstrating *excellence* in the commitment to the achievement of personal and team goals
- making a commitment to *persevere* with whatever challenge

VSV recognises that optimal levels of student engagement and wellbeing are fundamental to maximising student learning outcomes. We also understand that students learn best in inclusive environments where they feel safe and supported. VSV teachers are committed to

knowing their students and understanding their individual learning needs so that they are engaged in meaningful learning experiences. Our personalised learning support combined with high expectations ensures local and global access to the highest quality, flexible, online, virtual and blended learning.

VSV teachers and Learning Advisors strive to develop positive learning relationships that are characterised by effective, regular and ongoing communication with students, parents, teachers and other stakeholders. These learning relationships are the essence of a supportive and positive school culture where the diverse learning and wellbeing needs of students are recognised and met. We encourage active and meaningful student participation and give all students a voice in their learning and the way their school operates, so that they feel valued and empowered.

The VSV sets goals, targets and key improvement strategies in the School Strategic Plan that are strategically designed to promote student engagement. The goals and key improvement strategies the current School Strategic Plan (2014 – 2018) are:

Goal

- All VSV students will be motivated and engaged learners

Key Improvement Strategies

- To effectively use student voice (student feedback) to inform and monitor the work of all teachers by empowering students to more actively shape their own learning.
- Continue to develop activities and online classes that encourage the participation and engagement of students in their learning, including opportunities for collaboration with teachers and peers.
- Further develop home/school communication strategies which promote understanding of the school's approach to teaching and learning in an online environment and explore ways of engaging and communicating with parents.

Rights and Responsibilities

Everyone in the VSV learning community has a right to access and participate in the school program.

Student Rights

All VSV students have the right to:

- engage in regular communication with their teachers and receive meaningful and timely feedback
- access a range of resources that enable them to maximise their full potential
- be respected, valued and have opportunities to learn from the differences of others
- work independently and as a group member, where appropriate
- engage with digital technology and feel safe within online learning environments

Student Responsibilities

All VSV students are responsible for:

- striving to work to the best of their abilities at all times
- regularly participating by submitting work in accordance with the prescribed or negotiated submission timetable
- taking some responsibility for their own learning by setting achievable goals and establishing a weekly routine or timetable
- maintaining contact with their teachers by utilising all available communication options
- where possible, attending and participating in seminars, excursions and online

and collaborative activities

- notifying their teacher if they are unable to meet submission deadlines
- using digital technology safely and responsibly, i.e. Acceptable Use Agreement
- obtaining all required learning materials
- demonstrating behaviour and attitudes that support learning and wellbeing for all and contribute to a positive school environment that is safe, inclusive and engaging
- understand that bullying, including cyber-bullying, violence, property damage, inappropriate language and disrupting the learning of other students is unacceptable
- maintaining a balance between study and other aspects of their life

Parent/Carer Rights

All parents/carers have the right to:

- meaningful feedback from and communication with teaching staff
- be notified of any pertinent information relating to the student
- access to any information regarding the student within the confines of any legal requirement

Parent/Carer Responsibilities

All parents/carers are responsible for:

- liaising with members of the school community in a positive and respectful manner
- providing the school with all relevant information relating to the student
- working with the school in a variety of forums and responding to communications in a timely manner
- supporting students to engage and participate in their learning program and the wider school community
- ensuring their child submits work in accordance with the prescribed or negotiated submission timetable

Teacher Rights

All VSV teachers have the right to:

- positive and constructive support and feedback from their colleagues and school leadership
- a safe and healthy work environment
- feel safe and supported in their use of digital technology
- receive professional development to build their capacity

Teacher Responsibilities

Teachers at VSV have a responsibility to:

- uphold the Victorian teaching profession Code of Conduct
- design and implement learning programs that:
- engage students in active learning targeted to student needs
- are in line with Victorian Curriculum and VCAA Study Designs
- incorporate appropriate ICT tools to enable collaboration, higher order thinking and reflection
- use purposeful, ongoing assessment strategies to monitor continuous student progress

- continuously evaluate and adapt learning programs based on student voice, Attitude to School Survey (AtoSS) and student achievement data
- develop strong learning relationships with students, parents/carers and other stakeholders
- maintain a safe, supportive and inclusive environment for all students
- be collaborative, cooperative and recognise the value of others' contributions with a view to negotiating the best outcomes for students, teams and VSV as a whole
- monitor student progress and if necessary, implement the Student Management Action Plan (SMAP)
- model behaviours expected from students
- build a collegiate atmosphere with other school staff to share strategies and support each other

Shared Expectations

There is an expectation that all members of the VSV school community will uphold the rights and responsibilities as outlined above.

Engagement Strategies

The VSV Student Engagement Policy reflects the school community's shared vision and aspirations that are essential in ensuring a positive, supportive and inclusive school culture as outlined in the School Strategic Plan. It is constructed on the understanding that student engagement is influenced by a wide range of factors. The policy includes all universal (school-wide), targeted (population-specific) and individual (student-specific) strategies to facilitate and maintain the highest standard of educational and social connection. This allows for a remote and diverse cohort of students of varying needs and vulnerabilities to remain connected with their educational environment. Strategies are implemented, monitored and evaluated to ensure a supportive and enriching learning experience.

This allows for the full educational potential of students to be identified and cultivated, thereby sustaining an environment in which students develop the interest in and capacity to become lifelong learners.

Student engagement involves communication and collaboration between relevant stakeholders. The VSV has a range of strategies and delivers a number of programs for students that are designed to ensure student engagement in the follow areas:

School Policy

- School Strategic Plan
- AIP
- Student Engagement Policy
- Curriculum Framework Policy

Organisation

- Processes and Procedures
- Partnerships with mainstream and alternative settings
- Partnerships with government and community agencies
- Student Management Action Plan

Learning Advisors

- Positive Learning Relationships

- Student Contact and Student Support
- Orientation and Intake Interview
- Supervisor Support
- Transitions and Pathways Program
- Careers Advisor

Teaching and Learning

- Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning
- Online Learning Environment
- The Lounge and F – 10 Sub School Space
- Differentiated Learning
- Personalised Learning
- Customised Learning Plans (CLPs) and Individual Learning Plans (ILPs)
- Launchpad and 11/12 Orientation
- Student Assessment (On Demand English, Maths and PAT Science)
- Timely feedback and individual learner support
- Seminars, Excursions and Camps
- Student Visits

Student Wellbeing

- Student Wellbeing Team
- Student Wellbeing Coordinators
- Student Inclusion Coordinator
- Educational Psychologist
- Social Worker
- Young Parents Program
- LGBTI Group

School Community

- Student Voice & Leadership
- Success with Distance Day
- 11/12 Orientation Day
- Better Together Days
- Awards Days
- Family School Action Team
- Parent Programs (Online & Face to Face)
- Parent Forums
- Portal
- F-12 E-Newsletter
- School Camp
- Making Waves Concert
- Transition Week
- Curriculum Days

Processes

VSV students do not physically attend on a daily basis so the Student Engagement Policy refers to a student's active participation in their learning program. Models for compulsory online lessons are being explored by a subcommittee of the Education Committee in conjunction with the Learning Specialist: Synchronous Learning.

The following are ways in which we identify and promote school engagement:

- Student engagement is identified through submission of work in relation to the prescribed or negotiated timetable and other forms of student activity such as phone, email, visits, attendance at online lessons, seminars or excursions etc.
- Where issues around students not fully engaging with their learning program are identified the Student Management Action Plan (SMAP) is activated.
- The school recognises medical or personal hardship as reasonable grounds for periods of non-engagement. The Special Provision Policy is activated in cases when appropriate supporting documentation is provided.
- Parents, carers and students are informed about engagement expectations at the time of enrolment and on an ongoing basis.
- The enrolment process and the intake interview are used to identify students who are at risk of disengagement from their learning program. Once identified, these students are provided with strategies to promote student engagement.
- Ongoing disengagement will result in a Student Learning Action Meeting (SLAM), where appropriate.
- Where required, Wellbeing or Inclusion Coordinators are consulted and referral made where necessary.
- A SLAM may be convened by the Learning Advisor and attended by key teachers and other personnel. Engagement strategies may be developed and communicated to the student and their parents/carers.
- Unresolved issues may result in a referral to the Head of School where alternative suitable educational pathways will be investigated.
- All student engagement data will be retained and stored at the school

Strategies to Improve Student Engagement

- Pre-enrolment interview for students who have been previously disengaged.
- Ongoing and regular contact using a range of modes of communication such as email, phone, face-to-face etc.
- Contact Time
- Relationship development through a comprehensive intake process
- Regular positive encouragement and feedback regarding weekly submissions
- School, home and student visits
- Student Voice
- Attendance at seminars, excursions, information days and camp
- SMAP Process
- Where required, A SLAM to develop engagement strategies

Behavioural Issues

Student behavioural issues at the VSV may include:

- not submitting work according to the prescribed or negotiated timetable
- limited or non-existent contact with their teacher
- being disruptive in the online environment or during face to face activities
- bullying and harassment in the online environment or during face to face activities
- not cooperating with their supervisor and/or teacher

Responses may include:

- Learning Advisor and/or teachers to contact student and/or parent/carer to resolve the issue
- Student to reflect on the incident (student incident report may be completed)
- Reflection may allow opportunity for student to take responsibility for actions
- Enactment of the SMAP process
- Student Learning Action Management meeting involving relevant personnel
- Identified as a student whose progress is of concern
- A Student Engagement Agreement

In the unlikely event that a student is removed from the online environment, seminars, camps, excursions etc., parents/carers will be notified when:

- The student is under 18 years of age
- The student is over 17 years of age, with a disability or impairment and is living separately, apart and independently from his/her parents
- For any reason the parent is not available or cannot be contacted. In these circumstances the Principal may then refer to the student over the age of 18 years of age in place of 'a parent'. Where a student has a disability or impairment, the principal must make enquiries as to the student's ability to represent themselves. After making such enquiries, if the Principal is satisfied that the student lacks the ability to adequately represent themselves, the student cannot be referred to in place of 'a parent'. In this case, as with a student under 18 years of age, the Principal may regard as 'a parent' an adult whom the Principal considers to be suitable and available to perform the role of the parent.

Student Support Group

A Student Support Group may be convened by schools to exchange information and facilitate student engagement.

Transitions (F-12)

Students under 17 years of age may be placed in a non-submitting category (NSUBMIT or Transitions) and referred to the Head of School when they have not engaged with the educational program for a period of time relevant to individual circumstances and the SMAPs process. Students will be transitioned and exited to an appropriate alternative program or setting. Students whose progress has been of concern will be reviewed for suitability for enrolment in the future. If enrolment is accepted, students will be placed on a Student Engagement Agreement.

The *Education Training and Reform Act (2006)* prohibits the use of corporal punishment in any Victorian Government school.



VIRTUAL SCHOOL VICTORIA