

**Student Wellbeing, Inclusion and Engagement  
Policy**

December 2022





## Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact Virtual School Victoria on 8480 0000 or [feedback@vsv.vic.edu.au](mailto:feedback@vsv.vic.edu.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) the range of engagement and wellbeing support available to students and families
- (d) our school's policies and procedures for responding to inappropriate student behaviour.

Virtual School Victoria (VSV) 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.

## Contents

1. School profile
2. School values, philosophy and vision
3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies
4. Identifying students in need of support
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## Policy

### 1. School profile

VSV is the state's leading virtual school, offering over 150 online courses to students from Prep through to Year 12. With an annual enrolment well in excess of 5000 students more students enrol with VSV than any other school in Victoria. Approximately 2000 students are enrolled full time, while around 3000 students, most in Year 11 and 12, complete subjects with us while 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 in 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.

In addition to offering a host of teaching and learning courses approved by the VCAA, our specialist teachers provide students with individualised learning and support. VSV teachers are dedicated to building the confidence and resilience of each and every student. Like any school, our teachers regularly support and interact with students, but they do so in a different way to most schools: they do so virtually.

A Learning Advisor role is undertaken by all teachers as a core element of their teaching position at VSV. The overall aim of the role is to connect with and encourage students to belong to the VSV school community in order to optimise their student engagement, learning and wellbeing outcomes. Building positive relationships with students, their family support network and, where appropriate, their health practitioner, in an encouraging, friendly and supportive manner is crucial when teaching in a virtual school. The Learning Advisor role also involves team teaching the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) program to students in Year 7 to Year 10.

## 2. School values, philosophy and vision

VSV's expertise in virtual learning along with our school values of growth, empathy, respect and collaboration, have made us preferred school for many students and the Victorian families who enrol their children with us annually.

Our vision is to see VSV as a system leader in online, virtual and blended learning: sharing our knowledge and expertise, and leading system conversations around online learning. VSV wants to lead a community of practice that will evolve and strengthen online learning in Victoria, and positively influence and support other schools to develop in this space.

## 3. Wellbeing, inclusion and engagement strategies

VSV 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 students feel safe and less isolated. We also recognise the heightened importance of the role played by parents/carers as educational supervisors to student engaging in online learning.

VSV recognises that optimal levels of student engagement and wellbeing are fundamental to student learning and life outcomes. We also understand that students learn best in an inclusive environment where they feel safe and supported. VSV teachers are committed to knowing their students and understanding their individual learning needs.

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. The enrolment eligibility criteria for students in our Medical and Young Adult categories result in VSV having significant numbers of students with more complex support needs in these areas. The data drawn from enrolment applications is used to inform school wide wellbeing, inclusion and engagement initiatives.

The VSV [Student Wellbeing, Inclusion and Engagement Policy](#) reflects the unique and complex composition of the school demographics. Areas of learning and support need are closely entwined, and the level of demand within the community is significant. To support this integrated policy statement, procedural guidelines provide more detailed information in response to each area of work. The policy and related procedure guidelines are built on the school community's shared values and vision of a positive, supportive and inclusive school culture.

As VSV students do not physically attend on a daily basis, policies are built around a student's active participation in synchronous and asynchronous learning programs and the communication mechanisms that foster effective interaction with staff.

This [Student Wellbeing, Inclusion and Engagement Policy](#) is constructed on the understanding that student engagement is influenced by a wide range of factors. It details 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.

A summary of the universal (whole of school), targeted (year group specific) and individual engagement strategies used by our school is included below.

### **Universal**

- VSV prioritise positive relationships between staff, students and their parents/carers, recognising the fundamental role this plays in building and sustaining student engagement and wellbeing
- The allocation of a Learning Advisor to each VSV student provides a strong foundation for development of safe and inclusive relationships with students and parents/carers.
- VSV recognises the critical role played by parents/carers in supporting student learning and safety. We welcome all parents/carers and strive to be responsive to them as partners in learning
- A VSV Health Promoting Schools team oversees the creation and maintenance of a culture that is inclusive, engaging and supportive and that embraces and celebrates diversity and empowers all students to participate and feel valued.
- Our implementation of Trauma Informed Practice (Making Space for Learning – Australian Childhood Foundation) acts as a guiding framework shaping whole school policy and practice
- The school leadership prioritise analysing and being responsive to a range of school data such as Enrolment information profiling the student demographics, attendance, Attitudes to School Survey AtoSS, Parent/Caregiver/Guardian Survey, student management data and school level assessment data
- VSV delivers the full breadth of curriculum including VET programs, VCE to ensure that students are able to choose subjects and programs that are tailored to their interests, strengths and aspirations.
- Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships curriculum is delivered at VCE and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum is embedded into course development and delivery schedules across Years 7 - 10. Age-appropriate education about standards of expected behaviour, healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality), resilience and child abuse awareness and prevention is embedded in the curriculum delivered to directly enrolled students in Foundation to Year 6.
- Teachers at VSV use the VSV Pedagogical Model for Online Learning as 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.
- VSV is committed to meeting its legal obligations under disability discrimination law including the Disability Standards for Education 2005 to ensure the provision of reasonable adjustments for students with diverse learning needs and disabilities.
- Teachers at VSV 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.
- Attendance at synchronous online lessons is encouraged for all students. Participation in timetabled classes is required for student in Years 7 – 10. The VSV Safe and Inclusive Virtual Learning Policy provides guidance to all student and staff.
- Processes for recording attendance at scheduled synchronous online classes and following up absence are set out in VSV's Attendance Policy.
- Incursions, excursions and regular community engagement events are provided to foster peer connection for students and parents /carers.

- 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 are run to support continuing students moving into different stages of their schooling. Vocational planning and guidance is available to support transition to alternative education settings. Students in Yr.10 are able to enrol in the ACE subject which also supports the development of vocational plans.
- Positive behaviour and student achievement is acknowledged in the classroom, and formally in school assemblies. Affirmation of achievement is communicated to parents and students through implementation of VSV values letters that applaud demonstration of school values.
- Students have the opportunity to contribute to and provide feedback on decisions about school operations through the Student Representative Council.
- 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, bullying or harassment.
- Peer connection opportunities are encouraged through a range of extra-curricular clubs and activities including: Games Club, LGBTQIA+ Club, Neurodiversity Club; Cooking Club and others.
- All students are encouraged to seek assistance from the Student Wellbeing and Inclusion Teams, their Learning Advisor, Year Level Student Coordinators, Assistant Principal and Principal if they would like to discuss a particular issue or feel as though they may need support of any kind.
- Wellbeing and inclusion assistance can be sought through the 'Report a Concern' function in VSV Online. Students, parents/carers and staff can reach out directly to the Wellbeing and Inclusion teams for support through a direct email to [wellbeing@vsv.vic.edu.au](mailto:wellbeing@vsv.vic.edu.au)

### **Targeted**

- Enrolment processes enable the identification of vulnerable and mandated student cohorts, upon enrolment at VSV. This triggers the initiation of Individual Education Plan (IEP) development and delivery and the allocation of additional wellbeing, inclusion and engagement supports as required.
- The completion of an Early Assessment Check List by each Year Level Student Coordinator at time of enrolment provides additional alerts and direction to teaching staff on areas of risk or vulnerability for students.
- The Learning Advisor undertakes an assessment of the learning, engagement and support needs of each student, calling on specialist supports across VSV to help shape planning and responses to the identified needs.
- Where students enrolled in the Sports/Performance enrolment category regularly attend third-party organisations (e.g. sporting/performing arts associations/agents) while undertaking their learning with VSV, Learning Advisors conduct regular check-ins on student welfare and engagement with the sporting/performance supervisor nominated as part of the student's enrolment application at least once a term.
- Staff use High Impact Engagement Strategies to support their efforts with students struggling with engagement and participation.
- Delivery of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is embedded in curriculum at Years 7-10 and implemented through synchronous online lessons. Plans for expansion of SEL across Foundation to Year 6 and to Years 11 & 12 are in development, with a view to implementing a SEL program including content on respectful relationships and consent education in partnership with NCASA in 2023.
- 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. An IEP is developed in collaboration with the student, parent/carer and supporting agency staff and a Student Support Group (SSG) facilitated to monitor and support the student's effective participation.
- 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 staff have participated in Safe Schools professional learning and are invited to participate in community celebration events such as Pride Day and Wear it Purple Day.
- 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 Advisor, having an IEP and a SSG and being referred to Student Support Services for an Educational Needs Assessment.

- Students with a disability and diverse learning needs 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, IEPs and SSGs. Students previously approved for funding under PSD, Disability Inclusion funding or NCCD guidelines are assessed and provided with an IEP and SSG.
- In response to the high numbers of students enrolled with ASD and other disabilities, the school ASD cohort plan and staff professional learning schedule shape wide-reaching support initiatives for these students and their families.
- 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. VSV assists students to plan their Year 10 work experience, supported by their Career Action Plan.
- Student Wellbeing and Inclusion staff lead staff professional development and capacity building alongside health promotion activities in response to needs identified by student data.

### **Individual**

VSV implements a range of strategies that promote individual engagement and wellbeing support.

- Learning Advisors build constructive relationships with students at risk or students who are vulnerable due to complex individual circumstances. A personal learning goal and an engagement goal that takes their circumstances into consideration are developed with each student in Years 7-12 by their Learning Advisor. Students in Foundation to Year 6 develop either a learning or an engagement goal with their Learning Advisor.
- Learning Advisors maintain regular contact with each student in their Advisory Group by checking-in with each student over the phone or via Webex unless the student is expected to be absent at the relevant time (e.g. because the student will be travelling and unable to be contacted). Directly enrolled students: minimum once per fortnight.
- Learning Advisors take notes of the issues raised and discussed during these check ins and note these on the student's VSV database.
- Learning Advisors conduct '*safety and wellbeing checks*' with students once a month during these regular check-ins by asking a series of short screening questions to monitor student welfare, safety and experience of virtual learning. Learning Advisors discuss any concerns arising from '*safety and wellbeing checks*' with Student Wellbeing Coordinators or Student Inclusion Coordinators. Where disclosures or allegations of child abuse are made during '*pulse checks*', Learning Advisors notify the applicable contact person in accordance with the [Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures](#).
- Learning Advisors record non-attendance at scheduled regular check-ins on the student database and follow up with schools/parents/carers (after 48 hours if no contact has been established within that time) for each student unless the student is expected to be absent.
- For directly enrolled students, Learning Advisors monitor engagement and participation in learning of each student through VSV Online (e.g. log-in history, submission of work, engagement with class activities, or through liaison with subject teachers at least 5 times a week unless the student has notified the Learning Advisor that they will be unable to engage with their online learning during that time (e.g. due to travel and internet connectivity) at the relevant time.
- A Student Management Action Plan (SMAP) is implemented to provide a staged response when sustained engagement and participation challenges arise for any student. SMAPs aim to identify and support students who are not fully engaging with their learning program. SMAPs may also be initiated when attempts to contact the student and parent have been unsuccessful. More information on SMAPs is available on [VSV's website](#)
- Student Learning Action Meetings (SLAM) are arranged for students who continue to disengage with their learning following the SMAP process. SLAMs are held to coordinate additional supports for students. Students are required to attend SLAMs with their parent/carer, Learning Advisor and the Student Wellbeing Team.
- Priority response is provided through the Student Wellbeing Team when risk to the safety of students or others is indicated in any way. Students requiring more intensive or specialised assistance with mental health or wellbeing difficulties are referred to the VSV Student Wellbeing Team. Those

experiencing challenges related to disabilities or learning difficulties are referred to the Student Inclusion Team.

- Guidance is provided for staff supporting complex or vulnerable students through a daily roster offering consultation with specialist Engagement, Wellbeing and Inclusion staff.
- Staged response planning with students may include input and intervention of Student Wellbeing and Inclusion staff alongside specialist Engagement leaders and teachers.
- Wellbeing and Inclusion Teams review the presenting needs and circumstances to develop and implement a responsive case plan in coordination with the student, parent / carer and supporting practitioners. The teams also assist with referral into a wide range of appropriate external supports such as community youth and family services, NDIS, other allied health professionals, Headspace, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, DET Student Support Services or Child FIRST/Orange Door and to re-engagement programs such as Navigator.

VSV works closely with the student's family and referring practitioners to support engagement and participation by:

- being responsive and sensitive to changes in the student's circumstances, health and wellbeing
- collaborating, with the support of the student and their family, with any external allied health professionals, services or agencies that are supporting the student to determine and monitor the right learning plan for each student
- engaging with our regional Koorie Education Support Officers
- Facilitating IEPs and SSG meetings for all mandated students.

#### 4. Identifying students in need of support

VSV is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. The Student Wellbeing, Inclusion and Engagement Teams play a significant role in developing and implementing strategies to help identify students in need of support and enhance wellbeing. VSV 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 through communication with Learning Advisors and teachers while the student is enrolled
- risk and vulnerability indicators identified through collation of the Early Assessment Checklist at time of enrolment by Student Coordinators
- attendance and participation in learning records
- anecdotal information or concerns shared by students or their parents/carers at weekly or fortnightly phone check-ins with Learning Advisors, including the 'safety and wellbeing checks' conducted on a monthly basis during these check-ins
- academic performance
- observations by school staff such as changes in engagement, behaviour, self-care, social connectedness and motivation
- engagement with families
- engagement with the nominated sporting/performance supervisor, if applicable (i.e. for students enrolled in the sports/performance category)
- 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:

- engage in regular communication with teaching staff and receive meaningful and timely feedback
- access learning resources in order 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
- feel safe and welcomed in online learning environments.

Students have the responsibility to:

- strive to work to the best of their ability at all times

- regularly participate by submitting work according to the prescribed or negotiated submission timetable and engaging with online learning activities
- take responsibility for their own learning by obtaining all required learning materials, setting achievable goals and establishing a weekly routine or timetable
- maintain contact with their teachers by utilising all available communication options and participating in weekly or fortnightly check-ins and unless expected to be absent
- where possible, attend and participate in seminars, excursions, and online and collaborative activities
- use digital technology in accordance with the VSV Online Acceptable Use Agreement
- understand that bullying, including cyber-bullying, violence, property damage, inappropriate language and disrupting the learning of other students is unacceptable
- behave in a way that contributes to a safe and inclusive school environment
- maintain a healthy balance between study and other aspects of life
- uphold the VSV Values of Respect, Empathy, Collaboration and Growth

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, the Student Code of Conduct and the Online Acceptable Use Agreement detailed in our [F – 12 Enrolment Handbook](#) and laid out in a range of VSV policies including the Safe and Inclusive Virtual Learning 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. Bullying will be managed in accordance with our [Bullying Prevention Policy](#).

VSV adopts a trauma informed approach to our understanding and response to student behaviour. Our school considers, explores and implements positive and non-punitive interventions to support student behaviour before considering disciplinary measures such as withdrawal from class.

When a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our school community, VSV will institute a staged response, consistent with the Department's policies on behaviour, discipline and student wellbeing and engagement. Where appropriate, parents/carers 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 inconsistent with school values
- teacher controlled consequences such as blocking a student's access to audio, chat or video or other reasonable and proportionate responses to misbehaviour
- referral to the Year Level Coordinator
- Student Learning Action Meetings (SLAMs) with students and their parent/carer

Suspension, expulsion and restrictive interventions that curtail opportunity for engagement in learning 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 Virtual School Victoria 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

VSV recognises the critical role parents play in supervising educational participation and engagement of our students and in ensuring the safety of the home environment as a place of learning. As part of the enrolment process we seek to clarify and confirm our expectations that parents are required to perform a range of functions including:

- facilitating communication between the student and teachers
- ensuring age appropriate and child-safe adult supervision of the student
- engaging with material provided by VSV both in a written and verbal format
- ensuring that the student has access to a telephone, computer, reliable internet connection and suitable work area
- supporting the student to engage and participate in the learning program and the wider school community
- ensuring the student submits work in accordance with the prescribed or negotiated submission timetable.

VSV values the input of parents and carers, and we 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
- following up with parents if their child is unexpectedly absent from the weekly or fortnightly check-in with their Learning Advisor (after 48 hours if no contact established).
- maintaining an open, respectful line of communication between parents and staff, supported by our regular contact with Learning Advisors and resourced through the VSV Parent Portal.
- including families in Student Support Groups and developing individual education plans for students.
- The appointment of a Family School Partnership Coordinator to lead engagement and consultation with our parent / carer community
- The facilitating of regular community engagement events including Connect and Better Together weeks, Award ceremonies, School concert and performance events
- involving families with curriculum-related activities
- involving families in school decision making
- coordinating resources and services from the community for families
- providing parent volunteer opportunities so that families can contribute to school activities

## 8. Evaluation

VSV 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 enrolment data, including parent report of medical conditions, practitioner or agency referral information, school referral information and trends in enrolment categories
- student data collated by student wellbeing and inclusion staff in the course of their work
- Early Assessment Checklist
- Response to Attitudes to School Survey and from Parent/Caregiver/Guardian Opinion Surveys
- NCCD audit
- Attendance, and participation data relating to synchronous and asynchronous learning

VSV will also regularly monitor available data relating to referral management and case allocation to ensure any wellbeing, inclusion 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 and through the VSV Connect (parent portal)
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Promoted through school communication with families including as annual reference in VSV Life (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 Wellbeing, Inclusion and Engagement 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, Inclusion and Engagement Policy:

- [Statement of Values and School Philosophy](#)
- [Child Safety Policy](#)
- [Bullying Prevention Policy](#)
- [Safe and Virtual Learning Policy](#)
- [Duty of Care Policy](#)

## Policy review and approval

<b>Created date</b>	<b>December 2022</b>
<b>Consultation</b>	School Council – Date: 18 <sup>th</sup> October 2022 – 28 <sup>th</sup> October 2022  School Community – Date: 18 <sup>th</sup> October 2022 – 13 <sup>th</sup> December 2022
<b>Endorsed by</b>	<b>Fiona Webster</b> Executive Principal   Signature: .....
<b>Endorsed on</b>	Date: 13 <sup>th</sup> December 2022
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