



**VERMONT  
SECONDARY  
COLLEGE**

# STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY 2024



## Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact [insert school contact details].

## 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.

Vermont Secondary College 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
5. Student rights and responsibilities
6. Student behavioural expectations and management
7. Engaging with families
8. Evaluation

## **POLICY**

### **1. School profile**

Vermont Secondary College is a large, single campus, co-educational school of approximately 1586 students with a focus on innovative curriculum, high academic achievement and a broad co-curricular program. Vermont is an outstanding college in supporting students to achieve excellent VCE results allowing access to a tertiary pathway in high numbers.

Our community creates rich and rigorous learning experiences that empower us all to participate with purpose, insight and curiosity.

VSC promotes the achievement of excellence in a learning environment that is safe, caring and accepting of diversity. Our college is committed to the development of life-long learning skills and attitudes that motivate and enable all students to achieve their individual goals and to make a positive contribution to their community.

We recognise that all staff, parents and members of the Vermont Secondary College community have an active role in contributing to the development of all students.

Vermont Secondary College is proud of its status as a high-performing neighbourhood state school. The goal of Vermont Secondary College is to draw on the qualities of the young people at the college and allow them to flourish in areas of strength and to develop in areas of weakness. We strive to support all students to develop the ability to recognise and manage emotions, develop caring and concern for others, make responsible decisions, establish positive relationships, act creatively, engage fully with learning, contribute to community, develop high expectations for self, and handle challenging situations with resilience and respond effectively.

### **2. School values, philosophy and vision**

Our college motto, 'Lift up thine eyes' provides the vision of our college community.

We aspire to be progressive and optimistic in our endeavours and interactions, constantly open to the improvement of wellbeing, engagement and achievement. Together, we are building the capacity of our community to engage meaningfully and contribute positively in an increasingly complex world.

Vermont Secondary College's vision for Learning and Teaching is to create rich and rigorous learning experiences that empower us all to participate with curiosity, purpose and insight. This is achieved through the implementation of the VSC Instructional Model, which underpins our pedagogical practice to guide us in implementing more consistent, high quality, innovative curriculum, assessment, teaching and learning practices with clear expectations for staff, students and parents.

*Our Statement of Values is available online at: [Vermont Secondary College – Integrity | Respect | Excellence \(vermontsc.vic.edu.au\)](https://vermontsc.vic.edu.au)*

### **3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies**

Vermont Secondary College 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 (year group specific) and individual engagement strategies used by our school is included below:

### **Universal**

Vermont Secondary College implements whole-of-school strategies to promote positive behaviour and inclusion, which include:

- 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
- deliver a broad curriculum including VET programs and VCE including the Vocational Major to ensure that students are able to choose subjects and programs that are tailored to their interests, strengths and aspirations.
- teachers at Vermont Secondary College use the Vermont Instructional Model in alignment with FISO 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 Vermont Secondary College 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 is 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 Program. Students are encouraged to speak with their teachers, Student Manager or Head of House, Assistant Principal or Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns.
- create opportunities for cross—age connections amongst students through school production, athletics and music programs
- All students are welcome to self-refer to the Student Wellbeing team, Heads of House and Student Managers, 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
  - BeYou
  - Safe School
  - Various Programs Funded through the Mental Health Fund
- 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)

The college participates in several whole-school programs that promote engagement and wellbeing at VSC.

### **Restorative Practices**

The school is committed to the use of restorative practices with students. All relationships between students and staff should be informed by this ethic and all conflicts that arise should be dealt with primarily using a restorative practices framework.

Restorative Practices:

- are underpinned by student learning and facilitate an environment of safety, trust and connectedness
- promote awareness of others, responsibility and empathy
- involve direct and voluntary participation of those affected by misconduct in its resolution
- promote relationship management rather than behaviour management
- separate the deed from the doer
- are systematic, not situational
- are concerned with establishing or re-establishing social equality in relationships; that is, relationships in which each person's rights to equal dignity, concern and respect are satisfied (Morrison 2002)

House staff are trained in Restorative Practices as are a number of teaching staff.

### **House model**

The House Model at Vermont Secondary College provides a framework for the provision of student learning, support and intervention services as well as student leadership and to promote a sense of community. The structure consists of three Houses: Hotham, Macedon and Stirling. Within each House there is a House Management Team:

- An Assistant Principal
- A Head of House
- A Student Manager at each of Years 7, 8, 9 & 10
- Two Student Managers at Years 11-12

These teams are supported as required by the Student Wellbeing and Pathways & Transitions teams.

The role of the House Management team and in particular the Student Manager is to provide the smooth daily operation of each year level House group and to create a cohesive, harmonious, productive and orderly House and college climate. Student Managers look after the general well-being of House students at the year level, have a highly visible presence, implementing the standards and procedures within the college, and are the first port-of-call in communicating with student families. This model of Student Management ensures consistency with students and families as they move through the College.

The House system also provides a way for staff to be aligned in terms of teaching and co-curricular programs, with many staff in the junior school teaching within their House. Students participate in a range of curricular and co-curricular programs and within the House such as:

- Camps
- Sport (Swimming and Athletics carnivals)
- Performing Arts (Talent Show & Theatre Sports)
- Community Focus Days

- Debating
- Year level activity and curriculum-focused activity days
- Targeted student wellbeing programs and initiatives

Vermont Secondary College prioritises student voice and agency underpinned by an active student body represented through our Student Leadership structure.

Within and outside of this structure students are involved in numerous leadership initiatives that include:

- Student Leadership Forum
- Social Justice and Community-focused groups
- House Community Focus Days
- Involvement in collection and reflection of student data

### **Targeted**

The House structure provides for targeted support to all students as required (please see above). Beyond this, Vermont supports students through the following:

- 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. See the Inclusion and Diversity policy for further information.
- our English as a second language students are supported through our EAL program, and all cultural and linguistically diverse students are supported to feel safe and included in our school.
- we support learning and wellbeing outcomes of students.
- 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 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 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.
- students enrolled under the Department's international student program are supported in accordance with our legal obligations and Department policy and guidelines at: International Student Program.
- 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.
- Example School assists students to plan their Year 10 work experience, supported by their Career Action Plan.

### **Individual**

Student Support Groups are conducted for students who are identified as needing extra support, either those who have a disability or are requiring ongoing wellbeing support. Students who are part of our inclusion program will have regular SSGs as well as students with OoHc status (mandated) or refugee status (if required and/or willing).

- Individual Learning Plan, Behaviour Support Plans and Support Plans will be developed for students when required. These will be monitored regularly with input from the relevant team members, family members and the student.
- Program for Students with Disabilities
- referral to Student Wellbeing team and Student Support Services
- referral to ChildFirst, Headspace, Navigator, Lookout or other appropriate services.

Vermont Secondary College 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 an Individual Learning Plan, Support Plans 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 ChildFirst
  - Re-engagement programs such as Navigator, Refresh or Renew as well as community schools such as other alternate settings as appropriate.

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:
  - with a disability
  - in Out of Home Care
  - and with other complex needs that require ongoing support and monitoring.

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

Vermont Secondary College is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. The House and Student Wellbeing team plays a significant role in developing and implementing strategies that help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. Vermont Secondary College 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
- self-referrals or referrals from peers

## **Reasonable Adjustments**

Instruction at Vermont Secondary College is differentiated. To support students, reasonable adjustments are made to the curriculum to support student engagement and achievement. Making reasonable adjustments involves the use of a range of strategies to support students to access the curriculum and make progress but with the expectation of the same or similar goals at the end of the period of instruction/learning.

Examples of strategies include:

- Reduction in the number of questions
- Chunking of information
- Scaffolding activities
- Starting at a lower level before progressing
- Provision of one-on-one assistance
- Providing sentence stems
- Allowing for a cheat sheet/formula/calculator/dictionary (unless otherwise specified in the curriculum)
- Shorter response in place of an essay
- Providing more time
- Reducing homework expectations

All students may benefit from the use of such strategies. However, students with ILPs and on the Inclusion Program will require the more consistent and regular use of such strategies. If these strategies are consistently used they should be documented and reported on.

## **SEAS (Special Entry Access Schemes)**

If there have been circumstances which have adversely impacted on the student's ability to do their best in their study, students should consider putting in a special consideration application through VTAC. SEAS are designed to help institutions to grant special considerations for course entry. SEAS is a single application which is sent to all the courses that the student applies for. Although SEAS applications are to be completed by the student and their family, students should first discuss a potential application with the Director of Pathways and Transition.

## **Special Provisions**

Students are eligible for Special Provision for classroom learning and school-based assessment if their ability to demonstrate achievement is adversely affected by:

- an acute or chronic illness
- a long-term impairment or disability
- personal circumstances

The Student Managers will be the first point of contact for the students regarding special provisions. The House team will decide on whether to approve special provisions for classroom learning and/or school-based assessment. School-based special provisions must provide evidence and use a range of appropriate sources including professional testing and reports, educational assessments and teacher observations. For Special Examination Arrangements and DES applications, VCAA is responsible for determining eligibility and for granting approval. The Head of Senior School Compliance and Assessments is responsible for making an application to VCAA on behalf of the student. Statistical mod

## **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:

- 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. 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/Student code of conduct.

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, Vermont Secondary College 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:

- 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



- referral to the Year Level Coordinator
- restorative practices
- detentions
- 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 Vermont Secondary College 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**

Vermont Secondary College 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 and through Compass
- 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 through the School Council and other forums
- coordinating resources and services from the community for families
- including families in Student Support Groups, and developing individual plans for students.

## **8. Evaluation**

Vermont Secondary College 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

Vermont Secondary College 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 and through Compass
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included as annual reference in 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 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

## POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

<b>Policy last reviewed</b>	22 March 2024
<b>Consultation</b>	School Council – 16 April 2024 Student Services Team – 18 April 2024 School Community – Consultation invited via Newsletter (March 28 <sup>th</sup> 2024)
<b>Approved by</b>	Principal
<b>Next scheduled review date</b>	22 March 2026