

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 on 98398800 / 97363650.

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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.

Yarra Hills 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.

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POLICY

1. School profile

Yarra Hills Secondary College was established in 2012, and prior to this it was known as Pembroke Secondary College. It has two campuses in Melbourne's outer-east, at Mooroolbark and Mt Evelyn. The Mooroolbark campus is considered an urban campus, the Mt Evelyn a regional one. Students attending the Mooroolbark campus tend to live relatively locally, getting to school by walking, riding, car or bus. Students attending the Mt Evelyn campus, with its larger catchment area, can live considerable distance from the school. Our overall student enrolment has varied between 700 – 1000 in the past decade. We have approx. 100 school staff members including a Wellbeing Leader and Mental Health Practitioner.

Yarra Hills Secondary College has developed some close ties to the local community, and enjoys support from some local businesses and community services.

Our school has some cultural diversity, with 8% of families having a Burmese ethnic background, and Chin-haka language background. The school also has increasing representation from students with an Indigenous/First nations background (approx. 5%). We are proud of our diversity and our inclusive school community.

We strive to provide a nurturing and challenging environment that empowers students to reach their personal best, both academically and socially.

2. School values, philosophy and vision

Yarra Hills Secondary College's Statement of Values and School Philosophy is integral to the work that we do and is the foundation of our school community. Students, staff and members of our school community are encouraged to live and demonstrate our core values of Respect, Endeavour, Achievement and Pride.

Our vision is to be the school of choice for the local community, providing the highest quality educational outcomes, extension and enrichment to all students in a supportive and inclusive environment.

Our mission is to provide opportunities, experiences and pathways that enable all students to reach their full potential while reinforcing the importance of our College Values. Yarra Hills' students should graduate from the school with a sense of pride, confidence and curiosity about the world around them, be respectful in their relationships, accepting of all others and aspire to be lifelong learners and positive contributors to society.

Our Statement of Values is available online [here](#).

3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies

Yarra Hills 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

Respectful Relationships program – YHSC is proud to have continued on from being a pilot school for the '[Respectful Relationships In Secondary Schools](#)' program, and this is now embedded in our [Health, LifeSkills and Aspire courses](#). The Respectful Relationships initiative teaches our students how to build healthy relationships, resilience and confidence. It also supports school leaders, educators and our school communities to promote and model respect and equality.

School Wide Positive Behaviour & Support program – (SWPBS) is an [evidence-based framework for Victorian government schools](#) and is the basis for our program for promoting and explicitly teaching appropriate and positive behaviours. Teaching, modelling and reinforcing positive social behaviour is an important part of a student's educational experience. Teaching behavioural expectations and acknowledging students for meeting them is a much more positive approach than waiting for misbehaviour to occur before responding.

Restorative Practices – YHSC uses [Restorative Practices](#) to encourage engagement and develop our school values and responsibility in each individual student. Our use of Restorative Practices aims to maximise student engagement and wellbeing and social justice approaches. Restorative Practices seeks to value and support those involved so that they feel empowered to take positive action to address the situation and move forward. We have partnered with [Real Schools](#) to support our Restorative Practices ethos and approaches.

Doctors in Secondary Schools (DiSS) – a Doctor (General Practitioner) and Nurse attend YHSC one day per week, providing medical advice and health care to students. They are based in the DiSS portable at our Mooroolbark campus.

Secondary School Nursing Program – YHSC is supported for two days per week by a School Nurse through the [Victorian School Nursing Program](#). Our School Nurse supports our LifeSkills and Aspire programs, our Wellbeing program, our Health program and curriculum, and (on a limited basis) individual students and small student groups. Their aim overall is to reduce risk to young people and promote better health in the wider community, through education and referral to appropriate services.

Mental Health Practitioner (MHP) – YHSC engages a full-time [MHP](#), whose role is: mental health prevention and promotion; short term support for students including direct counselling, and; coordinating supports with other services for students with complex needs.

Wellbeing specialists – YHSC has a dedicated Wellbeing Leader, and Student Wellbeing Coordinators on each campus.

Other whole of school strategies to promote positive behaviour and inclusion 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 and that embraces and celebrates **diversity** and empowers all students to participate and feel valued
- *being 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, VCE and VCE-VM to ensure that students are able to choose subjects and programs that are tailored to their interests, strengths and aspirations
- teachers at Yarra Hills Secondary College use our bespoke '**WHAT IF**' **common instructional model** 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 Yarra Hills 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** are incorporated into our curriculum and programs, 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 (through Rewards Points, 'green' Compass posts, and other channels of communication)
- 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 Representative Council and other forums. Students are also encouraged to speak with their teachers, Year Level Coordinator, Head of School, Assistant Principal and Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns.
- create opportunities for cross—age connections amongst students through school productions, sports carnivals, music programs, specialist camps, and the Peer Support programs
- all students are welcome to self-refer to Wellbeing staff, the School Nurse, School Chaplain, Year Level Coordinators, Assistant Principal and Principal, and a doctor or nurse from the Doctors in Schools Service, if they would like to discuss a particular issue or feel as though they may need support of any kind.
- programs, incursions and excursions developed to address issue specific needs or behaviour (i.e. ManCave, Flourish)
- opportunities for student **inclusion** (i.e. sports teams, recess and lunchtime clubs and activities, special interest groups)
- 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

- each year level has a Year Level Coordinator, a senior teacher responsible for their year, who monitor the health and wellbeing of students in their year, and act as a point of contact for students who may need additional support
- 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 from refugee background through participating in relevant programs and community partnerships (such as with Foundation House), and relevant professional learning (such as trauma-informed teaching practices)
- Koorie/First Nations-background 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. We connect all of our Koorie/First Nations-background students to connect with our Marrung Lead (or First Nations champion, or Koorie/First Nations-background Engagement Support Officer, or similar) and ensure they can be included in focused programs at the network, regional and state level
- 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. Our college provides specific education on gender diversity through its Health, and Life Skills, curricula, develops and maintains awareness with specific annual events such as IDAHOBIT-acknowledgement activities, and provides ongoing safe-spaces and forums for LGBTIQ+ students and their allies (such as the PRISM club).
- 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
- all students at Yarra Hills Secondary College from Year 7 - 12 will be assisted to develop a Career Action Plan, with targeted goals and support to plan for their future. The college assists students to plan their Year 10 work experience, supported by their Career Action Plan
- The Wellbeing team will support students in need of extra assistance beyond the Year Level Coordinator and ensure steps are taken to address the needs of students.
- The Wellbeing team will undertake health promotion and social skills development in response to needs identified by student wellbeing data, classroom teachers or other school staff, and/or as needed to support local school's network, school region, or state-wide initiatives, each year
- The Support and Inclusion (Integration) team will further support students who have funding for disabilities or additional needs and arrange regular student support group meetings to monitor the progress of each student. staff will apply a trauma-informed approach to working with students who have experienced trauma
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- 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](#)

Individual

Yarra Hills 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 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; ChildFirst, and; Orange Door
 - Re-engagement programs such as Navigator

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 Plan in collaboration with the student and their family
- engaging with our regional Koorie Education Support Officers (KESO)
- running regular Student Support Group meetings for all students:
 - with a disability
 - in Out of Home Care
 - with other complex needs that require ongoing support and monitoring.

Links to relevant Department of Education Policy and Advisory Library:

- [Student Support Groups](#)
- [Individual Education Plans](#)
- [Behaviour - Students](#)
- [Behaviour Support Plans](#)
- [Student Support Services](#)
- [Program for Students with Disabilities](#)
- [Mental health toolkit](#)
- [headspace](#)
- [Navigator](#)
- [LOOKOUT](#)

4. Identifying students in need of support

Yarra Hills Secondary College is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. The Wellbeing, and Student Management, teams play a significant role in developing and implementing strategies to help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. Yarra Hills 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, student management and suspension data
- engagement with families
- 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:

- 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.

6. Student behavioural expectations and management

Behavioural expectations of students are grounded in our school's Statement of Values and our [Student code of conduct](#).

Violence, bullying, and other offensive and harmful behaviours such as racism, harassment and discrimination will not be tolerated. 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, Yarra Hills 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 implements 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.

Student engagement: Regular attendance and positive behaviours are supported most effectively at Yarra Hills Secondary College through relationship-based, whole-school and classroom practices, including:

- Establishing predictable, fair and democratic classrooms and school environments
- Ensuring student participation in the development of classroom and whole school expectations
- Providing personalised learning programs where necessary
- Empowering students by creating multiple opportunities for them to take responsibility and be involved in decision-making
- Providing physical environments conducive to positive and safe behaviours as well as effective engagement in learning
- Implement school-wide positive and educative behaviour support strategies.

Responses and consequences for inappropriate behaviour will depend on the nature, context and severity of the incident and will be responded to and dealt with in a graded process through the relevant staff member and/or Coordinator. This may include:

- Identifying to, or warning, a student that their behaviour is inappropriate
- teacher controlled strategies and consequences such as moving a student within a classroom or other reasonable and proportionate responses to misbehaviour, such as engaging our '4R' process (Remind, Refocus, Relocate, Remove)

- Consideration of the college's 'non-negotiables', which includes swearing at staff, engaging in physical threats or conduct
- Counselling of student regarding the behaviour
- Engaging in a restorative process/es with impacted students and/or staff
- Confiscation of items or withdrawal from activity
- Loss of privileges
- Yard Duty and/or school-based community service
- Compensation, replacement, or repair of damaged property
- Detention – lunchtime or after school
- Removal from class: Coordinators involved and parents are notified. Students are expected to renegotiate with the relevant staff member (engage in a restorative practice) to return to class by the next scheduled lesson. On occasions due to circumstances, staff will initiate this discussion.
- Exclusion from class
- External suspension
- Expulsion
- Informing police as per our duty of care and legal obligations, and police involvement for serious breaches regarding extremely serious issues

Broader support strategies will include:

- Involving and supporting the parents/guardians,
- Involving the Student Wellbeing Coordinator or Pathways Leader (Career Action Plans)
- Tutoring/peer tutoring
- Mentoring and/or counselling
- Restorative Practices, and mediation
- Respectful Relationships Education
- Convening student support group meetings – the student support group is an important component of the staged response for students facing difficulty with engagement, attendance or behaviour
- Developing individualised flexible learning, behaviour or attendance plans
- Providing broader educational programs, for example experiential learning, work education, camps/ outdoor education/creative arts
- Involving Department of Education, external professional, and community, support agencies.

The Principal and School Council responsibilities (regarding suspension and expulsion)

- A student will only be suspended or expelled from school in situations where all other measures have been implemented without success or where an immediate suspension is the only appropriate course of action in response to the student's behaviour.
- The school's actions and consequences process is framed in a way to encourage students to accept responsibility for their actions, and to participate fully and positively in their educational experience.
- The College Principal and Campus Principals are responsible for leading the development and implementation of our *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy*.

Suspension, expulsion and restrictive interventions[MC1] are measures of last resort and may only be used in situations consistent with Department policy, available at:

- [Suspension policy](#)
- [Expulsion policy](#)
- [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 Yarra Hills 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

Yarra Hills 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 create successful partnerships with parents and carers by:

- ensuring that all parents have access to our school policies and procedures, available on our school website
- maintaining an open, respectful line of communication between parents and staff, supported by our Communicating with School Staff policy.
- providing 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
- coordinating resources and services from the community for families
- including families in Student Support Groups, and developing individual plans for students.

8. Evaluation

Yarra Hills 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 (CASES21 is the mandatory system of record for all Victorian government schools to manage student and school administration processes)
- SOCS (SOCS – Student Online Case System – is a system for recording, managing and reporting cases for student support services)

Yarra Hills 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
- 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/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](#)
- [Code of Conduct](#)

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	March 2023
Consultation Consultation on this policy is mandatory	School Council meeting date: March 21, 2023 Parents/families – via School Council, and community-wide invitation for feedback Students – via SRC
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date (must be within 2 years)	By March 2025