



STUDENT WELLBEING & ENGAGEMENT POLICY

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all students and members of the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School (VCASS) 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
- 1.2. The Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School is committed to providing a safe, secure and stimulating learning environment for all students. We understand that students reach their full potential 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.
- 1.3. 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.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1. This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions.

3. CONTENTS

- School profile
- School values, philosophy and vision
- Wellbeing and Engagement strategies
- Identifying students in need of support
- Student rights and responsibilities
- Shared responsibilities
- Student behavioural expectations and management
- Engaging with families
- Evaluation

4. SCHOOL PROFILE

- 4.1. The Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School provides a nationally and internationally recognised specialist program for the training of talented young dancers, musicians, visual artists, theatre artists and students in other elite programs.

- 4.2. The International Student Program at VCASS is organised under the auspices of the Victorian State Government Department of Education (CRICOS code 00861K).
- 4.3. The school community has high expectations of students and they are encouraged to develop a passion for learning and a sense of respect for themselves and others.
- 4.4. The school is committed to providing a safe and nurturing learning environment that recognises and caters for the different academic, artistic, cultural, health and pastoral needs of students. Our expectation is that students from the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School will behave appropriately at all times. They will be caring, self-disciplined, resilient, self-confident, creative, passionate and compassionate individuals who will have developed beyond their expectations.

5. SCHOOL VALUES, PHILOSOPHY AND VISION

- 5.1. The Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School believes in the following values:
 - a) The programs of, and teaching in, the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School support and promote our commitment to the arts, education, personal development and training through:
 - b) The importance of, and promise to, our Philosophy as expressed through the *Mission, Vision and Guiding Principles*
 - c) Our desire to achieve a highly positive ethos and culture within our programs of academic, dance, music, visual arts and theatre arts
 - d) The way we value the arts and the expression of this through our organisation, planning and priorities
 - e) Our guarantee to the principles of education and training within our heritage programs of dance and music and how this may influence all other programs in the school now and in the future
 - f) Our commitment to a child safe environment

6. MISSION

- 6.1. The Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School provides a nationally and internationally recognised specialist program for the training of talented young dancers, musicians, visual artists and theatre artists. Integral to this program is the provision of a high quality academic education that is also offered to external elite training organisations. Within our school community, students will be encouraged to develop a passion for learning and a sense of respect for themselves and others.
- 6.2. The school is committed to providing a safe and nurturing learning environment that recognises and caters for the different academic, artistic, cultural, health and pastoral needs of students.
- 6.3. The school is also committed to providing state of the art facilities and resources designed to meet its specific responsibilities as a significant institution for the education and training of young dancers, musicians, visual artists and theatre artists.

7. VISION

- 7.1. The Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School aspires to be one of the finest schools for talented young dancers, musicians, visual artists and theatre artists internationally, through the provision of innovative, creative and excellent programs.
- 7.2. Students from the Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School will be resilient, self-confident, creative, passionate and compassionate individuals, who will have developed beyond their expectations. They will be significant contributors to the artistic and cultural life of Australia, as well as at an international level.

8. WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

8.1. The Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School has developed a range of strategies to promote engagement, an inclusive and safe environment, positive behaviour and respectful relationships for all students in our school. We recognise the importance of student friendships and peer support in helping children and students feel safe, valued and included. 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.

8.2. A summary of the whole of school, targeted and individual engagement strategies used by our school is included below:

a) Whole of school

- i. high and consistent expectations of all staff, students and parents and carers
- ii. prioritise positive relationships between staff and students, recognising the fundamental role this plays in building and sustaining student wellbeing
- iii. creating a culture that is inclusive, engaging and supportive and that embraces and celebrates diversity and empowers all students to participate and feel valued
- iv. acknowledging and welcoming all parents/carers as responsive partners in learning
- v. 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
- vi. within the context of a specialist school deliver a curriculum that ensures all students are able to choose subjects and programs that are tailored to their interests, strengths and aspirations
- vii. teachers at our school adopt a broad range of teaching and assessment approaches to effectively respond to the diverse strengths and needs of our students and follow the standards set by the Victorian Institute of Teaching
- viii. 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
- ix. carefully planned transition programs to support students moving into different stages of their schooling
- x. positive behaviour and student achievement is acknowledged in the classroom, and formally in communication to parents
- xi. monitor student attendance and implement attendance improvement strategies at a whole-school, cohort and individual level
- xii. all students have the opportunity to contribute to and provide feedback on decisions about school operations through the Student Representative Councils and School Council. Students are also encouraged to speak with their teachers, Year Level Coordinator, Assistant Principal and Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns.
- xiii. all students are welcome to self-refer to the Assistant Head of Student Services, Head of Student Services, Year Level Coordinators, Assistant Principals 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.

- xiv. we engage in school wide positive behaviour support with our staff and students, which includes programs such as Safe Schools and Respectful Relationships.
- xv. programs, incursions and excursions developed to address specific needs and support health and well-being, such as Junior Camp and the SHAW Program.
- xvi. 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.

b) Targeted

- i. each year group has a Year Level Coordinator, a senior teacher responsible for their year, who monitors the health and wellbeing of students in their year, and acts as a point of contact for students who may need additional support
- ii. each student is supported by a Wellbeing Mentor
- iii. Indigenous students are supported to engage fully in their education, in a positive learning environment that understands and appreciates the strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. All Indigenous students will be offered an individual education plan.
- iv. our English as a second language students are supported through our EAL support program, and all cultural and linguistically diverse students are supported to feel safe and included in our school including through our Wellbeing Program
- v. 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](#). *Pride Collective*, our LGBTIQ+ and Allies Group meets regularly.
- vi. wellbeing and health staff will undertake health promotion and social skills development in response to needs identified by student wellbeing data, classroom teachers or other school staff each year
- vii. all students from Year 9 and above will be assisted to develop a Career Action Plan, with targeted goals and support to plan for their future

c) Individual

The Victorian College of the Arts implements a range of strategies that support and promote individual engagement. These can include:

- i. building constructive learning based relationships supporting students at risk or students who are vulnerable due to complex individual circumstances
- ii. meeting with student and their parent/carer to talk about how best to help the student engage with school
- iii. developing a Student Support Plan as required
- iv. considering if any environmental changes need to be made, for example changing the classroom set up
- v. referring student to school-based wellbeing supports, Student Support Services and appropriate external supports such as council-based youth and family services, other allied health professionals, Headspace, child and adolescent mental health services or ChildFirst

8.3. Where necessary the school will support the student's family to engage by:

- a) being responsive and sensitive to changes in the student's circumstances and health and wellbeing
- b) 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
- c) monitoring individual student attendance and developing an Attendance Improvement Plan in collaboration with the student and their family
- d) engaging with our regional Koorie Education Support Officers
- e) running regular Student Support Group meetings for all students:
 - i. with a disability
 - ii. in Out of Home Care
 - iii. with other complex needs that require ongoing support and monitoring

9. IDENTIFYING STUDENTS IN NEED OF SUPPORT

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

- a) personal, health and learning information gathered upon enrolment and while the student is enrolled
- b) attendance records
- c) academic performance
- d) observations by school staff such as changes in engagement, behaviour, self-care, social connectedness and motivation
- e) online check ins
- f) attendance, detention and suspension data
- g) engagement with families
- h) self-referrals or referrals from peers
- i) content of student work (for example artworks, written work, self-reflections)

10. STUDENTS RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

10.1. 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.

10.2. Students have the right to:

- a) Be treated with fairness and respect.
- b) Express their views through appropriate channels such as student leadership structures and the school council.
- c) Effective communication between school and home.

d) Receive appropriate assistance to resolve school related problems wherever possible.

e) Receive ongoing communications, assessments and reports about their progress.

10.3. Students have the responsibility to:

a) Attend school regularly and punctually.

b) Remain within the school throughout the school day.

c) Participate positively and cooperatively in the educational opportunities presented by the school in both academic and specialist areas.

d) Respect the rights of others to learn.

e) Respect the individuality of students, staff and others regardless of race, religion, sexuality, gender expression, neurodiversity or other personal attributes.

f) Behave at all times in a manner which shows regard for their own and others safety.

g) Respect their personal health and comply with the legal prohibitions associated with the use of cigarettes, e-cigarettes, vapes, alcohol and other drugs.

h) Care for their own property and respect the property of fellow students and of the school.

i) Hand work in on time.

j) Inform teachers of subject related difficulties.

k) Care for their environment and assist in keeping the school clean and tidy.

l) Place the highest value on honesty in their dealings with teachers and with each other.

m) Follow appearance, dress and uniform requirements in all parts of the program.

10.4. 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.

11. SHARED EXPECTATIONS

11.1. The whole school community has been involved in developing shared expectations for the participation and behaviour of staff, students and their parents. The purpose of these shared expectations is to promote the following values in and out of the school.

11.2. Belonging and high expectations: We will work to ensure that our school is a comfortable, safe place for everyone to work and learn together, where all staff and students show consideration for others and treat others with dignity and fairness.

11.3. Learning and Training: To support learning and training:

a) Students must attend school regularly and punctually.

b) Students are expected to be present at school and able to engage safely and fully in all learning activities.

c) Student illness/absence should be communicated to the school by 9.00am each day by parents to assist the school in effectively managing absences.

d) Students should take responsibility for their work and request assistance when necessary.

e) Students should hand in their work on the due date. Late submission of work and extensions will be governed by the 'Completion of Schoolwork Policy.'

f) Students who choose to bring mobile phones to school must have them switched off and securely stored in their lockers during school hours - from the commencement of the school day (8.30am) until the end of the last timetabled activity of the day.

11.4. Respect: Students should:

- a) Treat others fairly and encourage others to do their best.
- b) Be courteous and safe while contributing to a clean and healthy environment.

11.5. Responsibility: VCASS is committed to the development of personal, social and community responsibility with students:

- a) Taking responsibility for their actions and decisions
- b) Being honest and fair in their dealings with others.
- c) Developing their strengths and interests to benefit from educational opportunities.

12. STUDENT BEHAVIOURAL EXPECTATIONS AND MANAGEMENT

12.1. Behavioural expectations of students are grounded in our school's Statement of Values.

12.2. 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.

12.3. When a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our school community, VCASS will institute a graduated 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.

12.4. 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.

12.5. Disciplinary measures may be used as part of a graduated 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.

12.6. Disciplinary measures that may be applied include:

- a) warning a student that their behaviour is inappropriate
- b) teacher controlled consequences such as moving a student in a classroom or other reasonable and proportionate responses to misbehaviour
- c) withdrawal of privileges
- d) community service
- e) referral to the Year Level Coordinator or Head of Student Services/Assistant Head of Student Services
- f) restorative and reflective practices
- g) detentions
- h) behaviour support and intervention meetings
- i) internal suspension - half day or full day
- j) external suspension
- k) expulsion

- 12.7.** Suspension, expulsion and restrictive interventions are measures of last resort and may only be used in situations consistent with Department policy, available at:
- a) <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/suspensions/policy>
 - b) <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/expulsions/policy>
 - c) <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/restraint-seclusion/policy>
- 12.8.** 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.
- 12.9.** The Principal of VCASS is responsible for ensuring all suspensions and expulsions are recorded on CASES21.
- 12.10.** Corporal punishment is prohibited by law and will not be used in any circumstance at our school.

13. ENGAGING WITH FAMILIES

- 13.1.** The Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School values the input of parents and carers, and we will strive to support families to engage in their child's learning and build their capacity as active learners. We aim to be partners in learning with parents and carers in our school community.
- 13.2.** We work hard to create successful partnerships with parents and carers by:
- a) ensuring that all parents have access to our school policies and procedures, available on our school website
 - b) maintaining an open, respectful line of communication between parents and staff, supported by our Communicating with School Staff policy
 - c) providing parent volunteer opportunities so that families can contribute to school activities
 - d) involving families with homework and other curriculum-related activities
 - e) involving families in school decision making through School Council and the PFA
 - f) coordinating resources and services from the community for families
 - g) including families in Student Support Groups, and developing individual plans for students.

14. EVALUATION

- 14.1.** The Victorian College of the Arts Secondary School will collect data each year to understand the frequency and types of wellbeing issues that are experienced by our students so that we can measure the success or otherwise of our school based strategies and identify emerging trends or needs.
- 14.2.** Sources of data that will be assessed on an annual basis include:
- a) student survey data
 - b) incidents data
 - c) school reports
 - d) parent survey
 - e) CASES21, including attendance and absence data
 - f) SOCS
- 14.3.** VCASS 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.

15. COMMUNICATION

15.1. This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- a) Available publicly on our school's website and on Compass
- b) Included in staff induction processes

15.2. 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:

- a) [Suspension process](#)
- b) [Expulsions - Decision](#)

16. FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

16.1. The following Department of Education policies are relevant to this Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy:

- a) [Attendance](#)
- b) [Student Engagement](#)
- c) [Child Safe Standards](#)
- d) [Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care](#)
- e) [Students with Disability](#)
- f) [LGBTIQ+ Student Support](#)
- g) [Behaviour - Students](#)
- h) [Suspensions](#)
- i) [Expulsions](#)
- j) [Restraint and Seclusion](#)

16.2. The following school policies are also relevant to this Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy:

- a) Child Safety Policy
- b) Bullying Prevention Policy
- c) Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- d) Statement of Values and School Philosophy

17. POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	7 August 2024
Consultation	SRC Student Leadership School Council
Approved by	Principal - 22 November 2022
Next scheduled review date	June 2026