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STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Valkstone Primary School on 03 9570 3986 or valkstone.ps@education.vic.gov.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) support available to students and families
- (d) our school's policies and procedures for responding to inappropriate student behaviour.

Valkstone Primary School 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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2. School values, philosophy and vision
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POLICY

1. School profile

Over 2018 and 2019 & 2020 Valkstone continued to grow both in population and facilities. By the beginning of Term 1 2023, the student population is at 706, with 61 full- and part-time-time staff: twenty-eight classes, four at each level from Prep to Year 6. Our students have diverse family backgrounds, a large proportion for whom English is an Additional Language, with an overall Student Family Occupation and Education index of 0.1315 and the Student Family Occupation index of 0.1733. Attendance rate in 2019 was 92% and the year to date (Terms 1 and 2 2020 - including Remote Learning) shows a 96% attendance rate. There are few long-term absence concerns, and these are addressed by the Student Wellbeing Coordinators.

Building works were completed in 2020. Stage 1, \$3.4m was completed in May, 2017. Four Year 1 classes moved into the new wing, along with the administration, leadership, and specialist support teachers. Deputy Premier, Minister for Education, James Merlino officially opened the new facilities at Assembly, Monday 29th May. These facilities continue to be used to their full potential. Work on Stage 2 began late in November 2017, with relocation of portables in readiness for the building of the new learning area (four classroom spaces and student toilets). Significant ground works, staff carpark and landscaping also began. Completion was November 2018. Four prep grades moved into the new learning facility in June 2018.

The Victorian Curriculum Eight Learning Areas and four Capabilities are shaping the planning and implementation of the school's teaching and learning programs and assessment and reporting practices. Specialist teaching is provided in Art, Music, Physical Education, English as an Additional Language (EAL), Japanese Language and Information Communication Technologies/Media Arts. Student teleconferences are held with the sister school, Tako Elementary, near Osaka. A focus upon Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) is included in classroom programs and coding through dedicated resources. Environmental education and student initiatives have established a vegetable garden, frog pond, chicken house and an outdoor learning area. Inquiry learning in the Humanities areas is a focus in 2020 and 2021.

Valkstone has high expectations of its students, teachers and parent community. We promote respect, co-operation, courtesy, fairness, honesty, tolerance and appreciation. Our learning environment fosters resilience and supports our students in becoming respectful and responsible citizens. The Resilience Project was introduced in 2016 and continues to be a school and community strategy to support students' social and emotional development focused upon skills and practices of empathy, gratitude and mindfulness. A growth mindset in learning and behaviour underpins teaching programs and structures. Student leadership opportunities include Junior School Council, the Green Team, Science activities, Year 6 Leadership Team and the Buddies Program.

Our school aims to provide a challenging and supportive learning environment that engages all students, equipping them with the appropriate skills and knowledge to be active and successful members of society. As a learning community, we endeavour to develop motivated, independent, lifelong learners who are globally and environmentally aware.

Teaching team leaders, as advocates for implementing the strategic plan, guide staff in innovative approaches and evidence-based practices. They share their passion for high expectations of positive impact on student progress. Leaders coordinate the curriculum across year levels to support student learning and transitions between levels. Learning is shared with parents through COMPASS, the newsletter, webpage and student/school presentations.

In November 2017, Valkstone celebrated 60 years of education with:

- films written, produced, acted and edited by our Year 6 students then screened at Village Cinemas, Southland
- a whole school concert in a 50s theme, on the school oval
- a 'Back to Valkstone' afternoon. Each event showcased the vibrant, diverse learning community, 21st century facilities, teaching and learning programs

2. School values, philosophy and vision

Valkstone has a significant focus on student wellbeing and engagement. Many positive strategies are used to connect and extend students, including engaging curriculum and extra curricula programs such as health and physical education, music, visual arts, EAL and LOTE (Japanese), ICT, English and Mathematics Challenges, camping, excursions, gardening, living skills, coding club and chess. There is also a strong commitment and high level of engagement in all aspects of the district interschool sporting programs.

Valkstone values the active involvement of parents in the learning and social development of each student. It seeks to foster this cooperative approach with parents through initial sharing of information at interviews, reports, parent-teacher interviews, phone calls and other forms of communication, meetings and the use of student diaries.

In encouraging and building this cooperative approach, it is acknowledged there will be behaviours and events that occur that compromise this ideal. When this occurs, the school will use positive and proactive behaviour management approaches, based on assertive discipline and restorative practices. Where appropriate the school will inform and involve parents in these processes through a Student Support Group.

A key component of the school's approach to prevention is teaching positive behaviours and the use of logical consequences to address both appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. The focus is on developing a whole school culture through a cohesive team approach to behaviour management; one that empowers the whole staff to commit to managing their own behaviour and student behaviour positively and proactively. An intended objective is to produce teachers who are skilled in managing all classroom interactions, resulting in substantial change in student behaviour, attitude to learning and hence, student achievement.

The school continually reinforces positive behaviour and this is supported by our "Respectful Relationships" document that involves all students, teachers and parents.

The foundation of our positive school culture is the active participation of all members of the school community, so they feel valued, safe and secure, are provided with meaningful opportunities to contribute to the school and have every opportunity to meet their personal and educational potential.

Our school is committed to developing a school environment that:

- creates a positive school culture focussing on student connectedness and relationships
- creates a school environment where students feel safe and supported with high expectations and fair and respectful whole school behaviour management systems
- encourages students to take responsibility for their learning and actions
- provides multiple opportunities for parents/carers and the community to be actively involved in the school
- encourages student voice by providing opportunities for students to contribute their ideas and provide feedback to policies and practices. These opportunities will be created through student leadership, Junior School Council, student forums and class meetings
- aims to improve student attendance levels and reduce late arrivals and early leavers through ongoing implementation of 'It's Not Okay to be Away' strategies and direct intervention measures for persistent absenteeism. This includes daily follow up with chronic absentees and access for families to support as appropriate
- provides a positive and self-sustaining school culture that is informed by the High Impact Teaching Strategies and the Literacy and Numeracy Teaching Strategies.

3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies

Valkstone Primary 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 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.

Valkstone Primary School strategies 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
- teachers following 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

- teachers adopting 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
- incorporating our school's Statement of Values into our curriculum and promoting them 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
- acknowledging positive behaviour and student achievement in the classroom, and formally in school assemblies and communication to parents
- monitoring student attendance and implement attendance improvement strategies at a whole-school, cohort and individual level
- students having the opportunity to contribute to and provide feedback on decisions about school operations through the Junior School Council and other forums including year group meetings and Peer Support Groups and student focus groups. Students are also encouraged to speak with their teachers, Year Level Coordinator, Assistant Principal and Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns
- creating opportunities for cross—age connections amongst students through athletics, music programs and peer support programs
- Welcoming and encouraging students to self-refer to the Student Wellbeing Coordinator, Year Group Leaders, 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
- engaging in school wide positive behaviour support with our staff and students, which includes programs such as:
 - Respectful Relationships
 - Resilience Program
 - Growth Mindset
 - Safe Schools
 - Peer Support
- opportunities for student inclusion (i.e. sports teams, clubs, recess and lunchtime activities)
- buddy programs and peers support programs.

Targeted

- Valkstone has a tiered approach to Wellbeing. The grade teacher initially deals with any concerns. From there the issues are referred on to the PLT leader and if needed to the Wellbeing Coordinator, Assistant Principal and/or Principal;
- Each year group has a Year Group Leader/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; resources such as DET's [Mental health toolkit or headspace](#) might be used.
- 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.
- 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 including through small group intervention support, individual education plans (IEPs).

Student Support Group Meetings are scheduled each term for our students under the Program for Students with Disabilities. Parents, class teacher, education support teacher, School Wellbeing Coordinator and any allied health professionals are included in this meeting.

- Individual Learning Plan and Behaviour Support Plan
 - Individual Learning Plans are developed for students who require support for their learning, including those below the expected level and those who well above the expected level [Individual Education Plans](#)

- Behaviour Support Plans are developed to support students who display behaviour that is unacceptable or those who are withdrawn.
- [Behaviour - Students](#)
- Program for Students with Disabilities
 - With the support of the Department Guidance Officer and Speech Therapist, students are identified and assessments undertaken to determine eligibility for program funds. Evidence is gathered and an application submitted after an Educational Needs Questionnaire Meeting, with parents, is conducted.
 - [Program for Students with Disabilities](#)
- Referral to Student Welfare Coordinator and Student Support Services Teachers are supported in identifying students who require support. Each case is considered by all stakeholders and support is allocated in line with Department Guidelines.
 - [Student Support Services](#)

Valkstone Primary School 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; [Behaviour Support Plans](#)
- 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 allied health professionals, Headspace, child and adolescent mental health services

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 [Student Support Groups](#)
 - with a disability
 - with other complex needs that require ongoing support and monitoring.

4. Identifying students in need of support

Valkstone Primary 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. Valkstone Primary School 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 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 'Respectful Relationships' document 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, 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; and
- 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

Behavioural expectations of students, staff and families are grounded in our school's 'Respectful Relationships' document. Student bullying behaviour will be responded to consistently with Valkstone Primary school's Bullying Prevention policy and Incident Analysis and Response documentation.

When a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our school community, Valkstone Primary School will institute a staged response, consistent with the Department's Student Engagement and Inclusion Guidelines. Where appropriate, parents will be informed about the inappropriate behaviour and the disciplinary action taken by teachers and other school staff.

Valkstone Primary School considers, explores and implement positive and non-punitive interventions to support student behaviour before considering disciplinary measures such as 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
- referral to the Wellbeing Coordinator, Assistant principal or Principal
- restorative practices
- detentions
- parental involvement
- behaviour reviews
- 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 Valkstone Primary School 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

Valkstone Primary 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.

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
- maintaining an open, respectful line of communication between parents and staff
- 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

8. including families in Student Support Groups and developing individual plans for students. Evaluation

Valkstone Primary 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.

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

Valkstone Primary School 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

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](#)

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	7/02/2023
Consultation	School council
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	Before 7/02/2025