STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand this policy, please contact Roger Blackwell at roger.blackwell@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

Outdoor 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.

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POLICY

1. School Profile

Outdoor School is a multi-campus (15 Mile Creek & Bogong) residential school within the Department of Education. Outdoor school is also a member of the Residential Outdoor Schools Association. The school's educative purpose -

"Developing future ready young people" - is realised by outdoor learning and a residential program that focuses on the personal, social, critical thinking, environmental and sustainability domains of the Victorian Curriculum.

15 Mile Creek Campus

15 Mile Creek Campus caters for approximately 1800 students per year, predominantly by offering 5-day residential programs to Year P-12 students from across Victorian government schools. We also offer a limited number of 12 day programs for year 9 students. The students generally attend as a cohort of 24 to 48 students and are accompanied by Visiting Teachers from their home school. The students represent a cross-section of Victorian enrolments in many aspects. We cater for all government schools and students from prep to year 12.

At 15 Mile Creek, students develop a deeper connectedness with the natural environment, learn to cope with challenges, develop team skills and leadership. We design and implement educational programs that cater for students from Prep – Year 12. These residential programs are primarily 5 days in length and tailored to meet individual school requirements. The programs on offer include Challenge and Grow, Leadership, Knowing the Environment, Future Makers and specialised programs for students with special needs. At 15 Mile Creek, students' learning is based upon interactions in the natural environment, 15 Mile Creek aims to:

- Develop in students an understanding of our relationship with the environment, others and ourselves.
- Inspire curious and adventurous learners who can transfer this knowledge, skill and disposition to actively contribute towards a sustainable world.

Our curriculum is driven by Victorian Curriculum, VCE, VCE Vocational Major & VET frameworks. Our students engage with the curriculum through outdoor learning opportunities from an Outdoor Education perspective. This includes adventure activities, nature education activities and learning aligned with educating for sustainability.

Outdoor School has, for many years, acknowledged high levels of student engagement through anecdotal evidence, student and visiting staff feedback and the Student Attitudes to School survey data.

Bogong Campus

The Bogong Campus caters for approximately 1700 students per year, predominantly by offering 5 to 12 day residential programs to Year 7-12 students from across Victorian government schools. The students generally attend as a cohort of 24 or 48 students and are accompanied by Visiting Teachers from their home school. The students represent a cross-section of Victorian enrolments in many aspects. They bring a diverse range of cultural backgrounds and socio-economic statuses. We cater to all government schools and students from years 7 to 12.

The Future Makers program aims to develop future-ready young people by educating them for sustainable living. Bogong endeavours to forge lasting relationships with government schools through a three-year contract. It targets Year 9 student cohorts who are engaged in the Future Makers curriculum over a minimum 10-week period. During this time students attend the Bogong Campus for a 12-day period, which incorporates a 5-day off-site bush trip. It is anticipated that factors such as the extended program, more conscripted enrolment and the demands of a longer bush trip will precipitate greater personal and group challenge.

2. School values, philosophy and vision

Vision: Educating for Sustainable Living.
Educative Purpose: To build Future Ready Young People.
Values: Respect, Integrity, Community Participation and Educational Excellence
These can be found at http://www.outdoorschool.vic.edu.au/our-values/577/

3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies

Outdoor 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.

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

Universal

- The School's values of Respect, Integrity, Educational Excellence, and Community, promote positive and respectful interactions between all members of the school community. Our school's 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.
- Pre-program information for students, parents and staff at home-schools clearly outlines rights, responsibilities and the student Code of Cooperation.
- Our programs focus on the development of personal and social capabilities.
- The training of staff in Restorative Practices, and their ability to use the framework helps build robust relationships and repair relationships when harm occurs. 15 Mile Creek staff have all participated in this professional learning and utilise this strategy.
- Group Teachers place importance on developing a respectful and positive relationship with students during Student Intake.
- Program leaders, inclusion leader and coordinators connect with visiting schools prior to the commencement of a program to identify students who may need additional supports at Outdoor School.
- Our staff work closely with Visiting Teachers to ensure that student needs are identified and met.
- The rostering of day and night teachers and the use of Cumulus, a communication software program, ensure staff are aware of student issues and are updated as frequently as required as student needs change.
- The School's Campus Principals, Program Managers and Group Teachers establish contact with parents and home-schools when necessary.
- Students have access to public services such as "kids help line", "Lifeline" and "Beyond Blue" through usage of the schools landline phones.
- The diverse curriculum offered at Outdoor School includes a broad range of engaging activities, community responsibilities and give-back opportunities as well as opportunities for gardening and woodworking.
- Outdoor School, through its curriculum and subsequent learning tasks, creates a culture that is inclusive, engaging and supportive.
- Students participate in group value and culture setting class at the beginning of a program.
- Students set individual goals to help support their development of strong positive personal and social capabilities.
- The school looks at analysing and being responsive to a range of school data such as attitudes to school survey, visiting teacher survey data, student management data and school level assessment data.
- Outdoor School challenges gender stereotypes and bias, promotes gender equity, offers positive female and male role modelling and challenges disruptive behaviour.
- Whole of school strategies are developed to facilitate the needs of staff, students, families and community members including LGBTQIA+ people who identify as same sex attracted, intersex, gender diverse, asexual or queer.
- High and consistent expectations are held for 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.
- Analysing and being responsive to a range of school data such as attendance, Attitudes to School Survey, Power BI Student and Visiting Teacher Survey, student management data and school level assessment data.
- Teachers at Outdoor School use 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 at Outdoor School 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
- Students have the opportunity to contribute to and provide feedback on decisions about school operations through surveys. Students are also encouraged to speak with their teachers whenever they have any questions or concerns.
- All students are welcome to self-refer to their group teachers or visiting teachers. 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
    - School Wide Positive Behaviour Support
    - Safe Schools
- Measures are in place to empower our school community to identify, report and address inappropriate and harmful behaviours such as sexism, racism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination or harassment.

Targeted

- Each group has a Group Teacher and Visiting Teacher responsible for their students, who monitor the health and wellbeing of students and act as a point of contact for students who may need additional support.
- Australian First Nations 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 – refer to our reconciliation action plan (RAP) for further information.
- English as a second language students are supported to feel safe and included in our school.
- Teachers and/or families of students who have been identified as needing further support are contacted pre-arrival to create a support plan to assist that student during their time at Outdoor School.
- We support learning and wellbeing outcomes of students from refugee background.
- We provide a positive and respectful learning environment for our students who identify as LGBTQIA+ and follow the Department's policy on LGBTQIA+ Student Support [insert any specific measures at your school to support LGBTQIA+ students] .
- All students in Out of Home Care are supported in accordance with the Department's policy on Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care.
- 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.
- Staff have training in trauma-informed approaches to working with students who have experienced trauma.

Individual

Outdoor 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.
- Considering if any environmental changes need to be made, for example changing the daily routine.
- 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.

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.
- Engaging with our regional Koorie Engagement Support Officers.
- Each group has a group teacher and visiting teacher that are responsible for their group, who monitors the health and wellbeing of students, and act as a point of contact for students who may need additional support.
- All students will be assisted to develop specific goals and targeted actions that plan for future actions.
- All teaching staff will undertake professional development in response to needs identified by student wellbeing data, classroom teachers or other school staff each year.
- Teachers will build constructive relationships with students at risk or students who are vulnerable due to complex individual circumstances.
- Teachers create a safe space for students if they are seeking confidential advice and support on any issues relating to family violence, sexual harassment or sexual assault.
- Program Leaders will be available to meet with students and their parents/carers to talk about how best to help the student engage with school.
- Developing an Individual Learning Plan and/or a Behaviour Support Plan where applicable.
- Consideration of any environmental changes that need to be made, for example changing the classroom set up, sequencing of activities.
- 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.
- 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.

4. Identifying students in need of support

Outdoor School is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. The Program Leader and Inclusion Leader play a significant role in developing and implementing strategies help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. Outdoor 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.
- Observations by visiting 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
- Pre-visits to home schools before programs commence.

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 and contribute to community.
- Display positive behaviours that demonstrate respect for themselves, their peers, their teachers, members of the school community, school values and code of conduct.
- 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 a trusted staff member first, or their parents or carers after the conclusion of the program. 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 and Student Code of Cooperation in our handbooks.

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, Outdoor School 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 punitive disciplinary measures such as detention, withdrawal of privileges or withdrawal from class. Outdoor School staff will work closely with visiting teachers in managing breaches in behaviour standards of our school community.

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 into another group or other reasonable and proportionate responses to misbehaviour.
- Withdrawal of privileges.
- Restorative practices.
- Withdrawal from activities.
- Behaviour support and intervention meetings.
- Removal from program.

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 Outdoor 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

Outdoor 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 management staff, supported by our Communicating with School Staff policy.

8. Evaluation

Outdoor 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.
- Student wellbeing reports on Cumulus.
- Incidents data.
- School reports.

Outdoor 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 at http://www.outdoorschool.vic.edu.au/policies/3699/
- Included in staff induction processes
- 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
- LGBTQIA+ 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

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	June 2026
Consultation	School Board 25 June 2026
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	June 2028