

Latrobe Special Developmental School

Student Wellbeing & Engagement Policy



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact the School Office.

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.

Latrobe Special Developmental 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.

CONTENTS

- 1. School profile
- 2. School values, philosophy and vision
- 3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies
- 4. Identifying students in need of support
- 5. Student rights and responsibilities
- 6. Student behavioural expectations and management
- 7. Engaging with families
- 8. Evaluation

POLICY

1. School profile

Latrobe SDS is the only school that provides a comprehensive curriculum for students with moderate to severe intellectual and associated disabilities between the ages of 4.8 and 18 years who reside in Latrobe City. The school is located in Traralgon and has an enrolment for 2025 of 83 students. The school currently has a number of economically disadvantaged students with an SFO (Student Family Occupation) index of 0.5860. The school is committed to providing a centre of excellence in the Special Education field within the Latrobe Valley network and wider Gippsland Region.

The school provides a specialised and challenging education in a safe and supportive environment where independence is encouraged in order to lead to fulfilling lives where students are valued members of society. The school's motto is "Towards Independence.". Personal independence and a valued lifestyle is strongly promoted for students. Latrobe SDS develops collaborative partnerships with all members of the school and wider community for the benefit of its students.

The core values of Show Respect, Act Safely and Try Your Best, and a Positive Learning Environment are the central component to the School Values Wheel developed to promote pride in our school. These values are central to the work undertaken in the school on a daily basis.

In 2022 we moved to a new purpose-built school site, adjacent to the Junior Campus of Traralgon College. Our facilities include: classrooms with attached kitchenettes, quiet spaces and toilets; art/homecrafts; STEM; tech/manufacturing; food technology; therapy spaces; multi-purpose hall; library; consulting rooms and staff work spaces. These are surrounded by stunning landscaping, bright and colourful playgrounds and open spaces including a basketball court, walking track and playing field.

Our dynamic team provides a stimulating educational program for students with significant intellectual and associated difficulties and disorders between ages of 4.8 to 18 years of age. Parents, staff and carers work collaboratively in planning educational and developmental programs for students. Student Support Groups are established for each student and emphasise the importance of a partnership between home and school in developing student goals. Our allied health team supports staff to develop programs which specifically target the learning goals of our students.

2. School values, philosophy and vision

Latrobe Special Developmental School'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 show respect, act safely and try your best at every opportunity.

SCHOOL VISION

We want to make our students the heroes of our school

SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

To create a safe, respectful and evidence-based learning environment where a diversity of student learners feel included, valued, happy, are actively engaged, challenged and supported to achieve success.

SCHOOL MOTTO

Towards independence

3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies

Latrobe Special Developmental School has developed a range of strategies to promote engagement, positive behaviour and respectful relationships for all students in our school. 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

- 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
- 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 at Latrobe Special Developmental School use an Gradual Release of Responsibility Instructional model to ensure an explicit, common and shared model of instruction
- teachers at Latrobe Special Developmental 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
- 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
- carefully planned transition programs to support students moving into different stages of their schooling
- positive behaviour and student achievement is acknowledged in the classroom, and formally in school assemblies and communication to parents
- monitor student attendance and implement attendance improvement strategies at a whole-school, cohort and individual level
- students have the opportunity to contribute to and provide feedback on decisions about school operations through the Student Representative Council and other forums including year group meetings and Peer Support Groups. Students are also encouraged to speak with their teachers, Unit Coordinator, Assistant Principal and Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns.
- all students are welcome to self-refer to the Student Wellbeing Coordinator, School Chaplain, Unit 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
- we engage in school wide positive behaviour support with our staff and students, which includes programs such as:
 - Respectful Relationships
 - Bully Stoppers
 - Safe Schools
 - Zones of Regulation
 - Interoception
- programs, incursions and excursions developed to address issue specific needs or behaviour (i.e. anger management programs)
- opportunities for student inclusion (i.e. sports teams, clubs, recess and lunchtime activities)
- 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

Student engagement and wellbeing is the responsibility of all members of staff at Latrobe Special Developmental School. Teachers who provide the central relationship with students are supported by a range of student wellbeing and support staff alongside community partnerships with other agencies. We have pathways staff to assist classroom teachers in developing individual pathway plans during transition. Our staff seek to improve the physical, emotional, cognitive and environmental aspects of students' lives in order to support them to live fulfilling lives and reach their full learning potential. We do this by seeking an extensive professional learning culture of coaching, mentoring, briefings, meetings invited speakers and external professional learning consultants to ensure that students' health and wellbeing remains paramount.

At Latrobe Special Developmental School we identify students with current or emerging mental health and learning issues so that we can provide preventative and early intervention approaches where possible. Teachers are supported through the child safety standards and mental health awareness and trauma training to recognise early concerns. Preliminary assessment of our students overall distress and prosocial behaviours are conducted for all students.

Protocols exist to facilitate support, referrals and family engagement. We also actively build on students' help seeking skills.

Our intensive intake system provides a comprehensive developmental history and assessment for every student. The school is then able to develop a holistic approach to management of our students and their families. Our daily briefings include all staff members to help support and monitor students and the regular professionals meetings contribute to stronger community partnerships and inclusive coordination and planning of services around the student and their families.

Maintaining an outstanding education for all of our students also requires the school to support a high level of professional learning for all staff. Staff participate in professional learning daily, in teaching and learning and student wellbeing meetings, briefings, in teams and individually through coaching, mentoring, modelling, through consultation and with guest speakers within the Performance and Development accreditation guidelines.

Other targeted supports include:

- Koorie students are supported to engage fully in their education, in a positive learning environment that understands and appreciates the strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture
- 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 \[insert any specific measures at your school to support LGBTIQ+ students\]](#)
- all students in Out of Home Care are supported in accordance with the Department's policy on [Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care](#) 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
- Wellbeing and Allied 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
- Staff will apply a trauma-informed approach to working with students who have experienced trauma

Individual

Latrobe Special Developmental School implements a range of strategies that support and promote individual engagement.

Students are linked into other agencies when they require support and Student Support Groups are conducted for all students. Our teachers provide a pivotal role in determining individual student's wellbeing and subsequent referral.

Recognizing that our students may lack the necessary skills to develop a strong sense of self, our school is committed to enhancing student's resilience and confidence through the acknowledgement and celebration of success in their learning as well as the positive relationships and connections they make within the school and outside school.

Student knowledge and capacity is developed by:

- Having high expectations for every student to reach their individual learning goals
- Challenging our students to be responsible and accountable
- Matching teaching strategies/approaches to students interests and prior learning
- Being explicit about purposeful, authentic numeracy and literacy learning

We achieve this by:

- Developing a deep understanding of numeracy and literacy content and teaching strategies
- Having strong on-going assessment and evaluation practices that incorporate constructive feedback to our students
- Monitoring and analysing student learning using evidence-based assessment tools and data
- Embedding the school's strategic planning within an effective, continuous improvement cycle

Latrobe Special Developmental 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 classroom set up*
- *referring the student to:*
 - *school-based wellbeing supports*
 - *Student Support Services*
 - *Appropriate external supports such as council based youth and family services, other allied health professionals, headspace, child and adolescent mental health services or ChildFirst*
 - *Re-engagement programs such as Navigator*

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*
- *engaging with our regional Koorie Engagement Support Officers*
- *running regular Student Support Group meetings for all students:*

4. Identifying students in need of support

Latrobe Special Developmental School is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. The Wellbeing and Allied Health team plays a significant role in developing and implementing strategies help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. Latrobe Special Developmental 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, detention and suspension data
- engagement with families
- self-referrals or referrals from peers
- referrals to our Mental Health Practitioner

5. Student rights and responsibilities

All members of our school community have a right to experience a safe and supportive school environment. We expect that all students, staff, parents and carers treat each other with respect and dignity. Our school's Statement of Values highlights the rights and responsibilities of members of our community.

Students have the right to:

- participate fully in their education
- feel safe, secure and happy at school

- learn in an environment free from bullying, harassment, violence, racism, discrimination or intimidation
- express their ideas, feelings and concerns.

Students have the responsibility to:

- participate fully in their educational program
- display positive behaviours that demonstrate respect for themselves, their peers, their teachers and members of the school community
- respect the right of others to learn.

Students who may have a complaint or concern about something that has happened at school are encouraged to speak to their parents or carers and approach a trusted teacher or a member of the school leadership team. Further information about raising a complaint or concern is available in our Complaints Policy.

6. Student behavioural expectations and manageme

Behavioural expectations of students are grounded in our school's Statement of Values/Student code of conduct.

Violence, bullying, and other offensive and harmful behaviours such as racism, harassment and discrimination will not be tolerated and will be managed in accordance with this policy. Bullying will be managed in accordance with our Bullying Prevention Policy.

When a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our school community, Latrobe Special Developmental 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 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
- restorative practices
- detentions
- behaviour support and intervention meetings
- suspension
- expulsion

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

- <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/suspensions/policy>
- <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/expulsions/policy>
- <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/restraint-seclusion/policy>

In line with Ministerial Order 1125, no student aged 8 or younger will be expelled without the approval of the Secretary of the Department of Education.

The Principal of Latrobe Special Developmental 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

Latrobe Special Developmental 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, 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

Latrobe Special Developmental 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 (Sentral)
- school reports
- parent survey
- case management
- CASES21, including attendance and absence data
- SOCS

Latrobe Special Developmental 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
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- 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 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](#)
- [LGBTIQA+ Student Support](#)
- [Behaviour - Students](#)
- [Suspensions](#)
- [Expulsions](#)
- [Restraint and Seclusion](#)

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

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Statement of Values and School Philosophy

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	September 2025
Consultation	School Council 2025 Allied Health and Wellbeing Team 2025
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	September 2027