

Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact Denise Strahan

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all students and members of our School community understand:

- (a) our commitment to providing a safe and supportive learning environment for students
- (b) expectations for positive student behaviour
- (c) support available to students and families
- (d) our School's policies and procedures for responding to inappropriate student behaviour.

Blackburn High 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 with our school values.

The objective of this policy is to support our school to create and maintain a safe, supportive and inclusive school environment consistent with our school's values.

SCOPE

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

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POLICY

1. School profile

Blackburn High School is a vibrant, innovative, caring and inclusive coeducational Government school for Years 7-12 that provides a comprehensive education to all students, located in the Eastern suburbs of Melbourne, about 16 km from the CBD. The behaviours and actions of all members of the School community are referenced to our Values of: Respect, the Pursuit of Excellence, Citizenship and to the School Learning Norms. We are proud of our academic and co-curricular programs that provide opportunities for all students to reach their potential. Established in 1956, we have a long history of delivering a dynamic educational program that empowers students to take responsibility for their own behaviour and learning and where effort as well as achievement are acknowledged and celebrated. Our excellent reputation in the community has evolved through the hard work of staff, students and parents working together with a belief that we are a premier school where learning is a lifelong pursuit.

The House System at Blackburn High School provides four learning communities that foster a sense of connectedness and belonging and stronger partnerships with the parents. The school day begins with a 15-minute Mentor session with students from Year 7-12 followed by five 60-minute periods throughout the day.

We provide a comprehensive, challenging curriculum that encourages a strong work ethic, as well as many out of class opportunities that enhance student school life. These co-curricular activities include clubs, camps and tours, our highly acclaimed instrumental music program, the stellar sport program that includes Sport Leadership and the Duke of Edinburgh programs, and the languages, Arts and STEM programs that celebrate student achievement.

The School has a well-established student leadership program that extends from year 7 to year 12 and includes not just School Captains and Student Representatives from each House, but elected student leaders across a range of areas deemed important to students including: House, Performing Arts, Sports, Music, International Students, Wellbeing and Inclusion. Students in these positions work with school leaders and their peers to lead initiatives that better our School's culture and awareness of issues important to students and the wider school community.

2. School values, philosophy and vision

Our School's vision is to create a dynamic and inclusive community where all students grow together to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens.

The Blackburn High School motto *Ad Lucem Crescimus* "Growing towards the light" articulates our shared vision that has focused on enabling our teachers, education support staff and students to learn and grow together. Our School Values of Respect, Pursuit of Excellence and Citizenship together with our Learning Norms, express the expectations, attitudes and behaviours for all members of our School community.

SCHOOL VALUES

RESPECT

Of oneself, others and of learning are displayed through honesty, integrity, consideration and the celebration of diversity in a safe and inclusive environment. We teach students to have due regard for the opinions, feelings, wishes and rights of others.

PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

Students are supported to reach their full potential by developing wide-ranging skills and capabilities, and to show growth academically, personally and socially. We value and celebrate effort and achievement. We motivate students to do their best, at whatever level that may be, by nurturing a culture of striving for excellence which in turn opens up the pathways to success.

CITIZENSHIP

Students are encouraged to become active and informed citizens through their participation at a local, national and global level. We teach students the skills and knowledge to understand and engage with the world they live in.

This is demonstrated through involvement in the rich opportunities within the school and wider communities. Students are supported to take increasing responsibility for their own learning, their relationships with others and their participation in all aspects of their school life.

LEARNING NORMS

- We enter class on time, prepared and willing to actively contribute to our learning
- We learn from our mistakes
- We value curiosity, creativity and thinking
- We challenge ourselves and others to do our best
- We behave in a respectful and constructive way

Our Statement of Values is available online at: <https://www.blackburnhs.vic.edu.au/page/7/Vision,-Mission-&-Values>

3. Wellbeing and Engagement strategies

Blackburn High 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.

Whole School Engagement Strategies

- 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 of all students, that celebrates the rich cultural diversity of our student population, their families and our wider community

- 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/Carer Survey data, student management data and school level assessment data.
- deliver a broad curriculum including VCE, VCE-VM and off-campus VET options, to ensure that students are able to choose subjects and programs that are tailored to their interests, strengths and aspirations
- teachers at Blackburn High School use High Impact Teaching Strategies to ensure that an explicit, common and shared model of instruction that is evidenced-based, is incorporated into all lessons
- teachers at Blackburn High 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 teachers are guided by our schools values, ensuring that their classrooms are culturally sensitive and respect the diverse views and backgrounds of all students, empowering them to participate and feel valued
- our School's Statement of Values is 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.
- transition programs are carefully planned to support students moving into different stages of their schooling.
- positive behaviour and student achievement is acknowledged in the classroom, their House and formally in School assemblies and communication to parents.
- student attendance is monitored, and attendance improvement strategies are implemented at a whole school, House and individual level.
- students can contribute to and provide feedback on decisions about School operations through a range of Student Leadership Teams. Students are also encouraged to speak with their classroom teacher, Mentor Teacher, a person from the House leadership team and/or Wellbeing team, as well as an Assistant Principal and Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns.
- opportunities for cross-age connections amongst students are created through Blackburn's Got Talent, the Mentor Program and House Performing Arts Festival, as well as through sporting carnivals, music programs and clubs.
- All students are welcome to speak to the Student Wellbeing team, their Mentor Teacher, a House leadership team member, 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, their parents and staff are partners in learning
- we engage in school wide positive behaviour support with our staff and students, which includes programs such as:
 - The Mentor Program
 - Respectful Relationships
 - ESmart
 - Safe Schools
- programs, incursions and excursions are developed to address issue specific behaviour (i.e. anger management programs, social emotional learning and development). This are coordinated through the House Leadership and Wellbeing teams.
- opportunities for student inclusion (i.e. House activities, sports teams, clubs, recess and lunchtime activities)

Targeted Engagement Strategies

- each House has Mentor Groups. Mentor Teachers and the House leadership team monitor the learning, health and wellbeing of students in their Mentor Group/House, and act as the first point of contact for students and their parents who may need additional support,
- all students from Year 9 and above develop a Career Action Plan, with targeted goals

and support to plan for their future. This program is delivered through the Mentor Program.

- all Koorie students are connected with their Mentor teacher, House Leader, the school's Marrung Leader and an Assistant Principal. The all have Individualized Learning Plans and are supported to participate in local and regional indigenous activities and celebrations
- all students in Out of Home Care have a Mentor Teacher who is supported by their House Leader, and have Individual Learning Plans. They are connected with Student Support Services and undertake Educational Needs Assessments. [Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care](#)
- student's Mentor Teachers, Classroom Teachers and the Wellbeing team undertake health promotion and social skills development in response to needs identified by student wellbeing data, classroom teachers or other school staff each year. This is mainly through the Mentor Program.
- students enrolled under the Department's international student program are supported in accordance with our legal obligations and Department policy and guidelines at: [International Student Program](#)
- 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 our additional EAL support program, additional transition programs for new students with multi-cultural aide support and through wellbeing programs that are tailored for these cohorts
- We support learning and wellbeing outcomes of students from refugee background through providing access to additional support and advocacy networks including supporting applications for scholarships and financial support. Students from trauma backgrounds are encouraged to engage with the school's

psychologist and wellbeing team and all teachers undertake professional learning on trauma informed practice.

- We provide a positive and respectful learning environment for our students who identify as LGBTIQ+ and follow the Department's policy on [LGBTIQ Student Support](#). Our school has an active and vibrant LGBTIQ+ student club who meet weekly and work with the Wellbeing Team to organise and promote inclusion, celebrating Wear It Purple Day and IDAHOBIT each year.
- wellbeing and teaching staff undertake professional learning every year to support them to promote health and social skills development in response to needs identified by student wellbeing data, classroom teachers or other school staff each year. The school uses the [SafeMinds](#) NIP program to support all teachers to identify and apply early intervention strategies for positive mental health
- staff apply a trauma-informed approach when working with students who have experienced trauma
- 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.

Individual Engagement Strategies include:

- [Student Support Groups](#)
- [Individual Education Plans](#)
- [Behaviour - Students](#)
- [Behaviour Support Plans](#)
- [Student Support Services](#)
- [Program for Students with Disabilities](#)
- referrals to the Wellbeing Team (includes on-site Social Workers and Psychologists)

- referrals to external supports as required including [headspace](#), [Orange Door](#), [BeyondBlue](#), [kids helpline](#).
- Attendance plans and [Navigator](#) targeted attendance support
- Support from DE [LOOKOUT](#) branch

Blackburn High School implements a range of strategies that support and promote individual engagement. These include:

- building constructive relationships with students and their parents/carer, where a student is at risk or is vulnerable due to complex individual circumstances.
- The child's Mentor Teacher communicates with and/or meets with the student and their parent/carer to talk about how best to help the student engage with School. At times, a member of the House leadership team and/or an Assistant Principal will also attend this meeting.
- developing an Individual Education Plan and/or a Behaviour Support Plan or Attendance Plan.
- considering if any environmental changes need to be made, for example changing the classroom set up, Mentor Group and/or House.
- referring the student to:
 - their Mentor Teacher, a member of the House leadership team and/or Wellbeing team.
 - 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:
 - with a disability
 - in Out of Home Care
 - and with other complex needs that require ongoing support and monitoring.

4. Identifying students in need of support

Blackburn High School is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. The student's Mentor Teacher, House leadership team, Student Support and Inclusion team and Wellbeing team play a significant role in developing and implementing strategies to help identify students in need of support and enhance student inclusion and wellbeing. Blackburn High School utilises 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. All of our staff undergo 'NIP' training (Notice Enquire Plan) with our school's Mental Health Practitioner
- attendance, detention and suspension data.
- engagement with families.
- self-referrals or referrals from peers.

5. Student rights and responsibilities

All members of our school community have a right to experience a safe and supportive school

environment. We expect that all students, staff, parents and carers treat each other with respect and dignity. Our school's Statement of Values highlights the rights and responsibilities of members of our community. We are also a Respectful Relationships school.

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.
- 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 House leadership team, Student Support and Inclusion team or the Wellbeing team. Further information about raising a complaint or concern is available in our Complaint Resolution Policy.

6. Student behavioural expectations and management

Behavioural expectations of students, staff and families are grounded in our School's Statement of Values. Student bullying behaviour will be responded to consistently with Blackburn High School's Bullying policy.

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.

When a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our School community, Blackburn High School will institute a staged response, consistent

with the Department's policies on behaviour, discipline and student wellbeing and engagement. Where appropriate, parents/carers will be informed about the inappropriate behaviour and the disciplinary action taken by teachers and/or House leadership teams.

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:

- educating the student about respectful and ethical behaviour and our community standards and expectations
- warning a student that their behaviour is inappropriate through an educative conversation
- teacher controlled consequences such as moving a student in a classroom or other reasonable and proportionate responses to misbehaviour. This may include a student conducting their learning in a space outside the classroom until the student is able to guarantee they are able to learn in a way that our school community expects
- withdrawal of privileges such as participating in extra-curricular activities
- referral to their Mentor Teacher, House leadership team and/or an Assistant Principal
- restorative practices
- detentions
- behaviour support plan and IEP 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.

The Principal of Blackburn High 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

Blackburn High 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 website.
- maintaining an open, respectful line of communication between parents and staff, supported by our Communicating with School Staff guidelines. Parents/carers will communicate, in the first instance, with their child's Mentor Teacher.
- involving families with homework and other curriculum-related activities.
- involving families in School decision making where appropriate, especially School Council members who work on the sub-committees.
- coordinating resources and services from the community for families.
- including families in Student Support Group meetings and developing individual plans for students.
- providing bi-annual Student Progress Conferences.

- Publishing a School Newsletter each term, readily available on the school's website.
- Publishing a weekly Newsfeed.
- Running information evenings as needed
- Celebrating student achievements at school events such as Presentation evenings, etc.

8. Evaluation

Blackburn High 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. Data is analysed by House Leadership and Wellbeing Teams and reported to School Council.

Sources of data that will be assessed on an annual basis include:

- Wellbeing
- Transition
- student survey data (e.g. AtoSS)
- incidents
- school reports
- parent survey
- case management
- CASES21, including attendance and absence data
- SOCS

Blackburn High 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 (online)
- 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](#)
- [LGBTIQA+ Student Support](#)
- [Behaviour - Students](#)
- [Suspensions](#)
- [Expulsions](#)
- [Restraint and Seclusion](#)

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

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

Date implemented	February 2021
Author	Department of Education
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Approval Authority	
Principal: Joanna Alexander Date: 17 Sept. 2025 School Council President: Geoff Hugo Date: 17 Sept. 2025 Revised and Updated: 26 November 2025 Principal: Joanna Alexander Date: 26 Nov. 2025 School Council President: Geoff Hugo Date: 26 Nov. 2025	
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References	Victorian Government Schools Advisory Guide