



Help for non-English speakers.

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact the school Social Worker on 9097 2000.

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.

Western Autistic 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 supports 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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POLICY**1. School profile**

Western Autistic School is a government funded school which offers an early year's program for approximately 300 young children with autism spectrum disorder in Prep to Grade 3. We have 250 school staff members including first aid officers, a Social Worker, an Occupational Therapist, Speech Pathologists, Leading Teachers, and Learning Specialists. Our school is culturally diverse with 27% of students having English as an additional language and 2% identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. We are proud of our diverse and inclusive community.

Presently, the criteria for entry into Western Autistic School includes a severe language impairment, therefore all students benefit from individualised support to develop their communication skills. Students who cannot solely rely on speech to communicate are supported to use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems to express themselves and emphasis is placed on authentic communication with the student. The school strives to navigate challenges around our student's ability to self-advocate via the expression of opinions, preferences, and problems, and to ask for help. We strive to provide a nurturing and challenging environment that empowers students to reach their personal best, both academically and socially.

2. School values, philosophy and vision

Western Autistic School's vision is a dedicated school for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Our School's mission is both to address the impairments specific to ASD and to activate individual strengths to optimise educational opportunities for our students when they move into more mixed settings. We achieve this by providing intense, personalised teaching at the start of each child's schooling to then allow the students to use these strategies in an integrated setting.

Our school's values are:

- Diversity
- Respect
- Learning as an ongoing process
- Sharing and growth of knowledge
- Collaboration

Western Autistic 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 respect, integrity, and kindness at every opportunity. Our school's vision is to empower students to reach their personal best, and fully equip them to contribute positively to society as happy, healthy young adults.

Our Statement of Values is available online at:

<https://westernautisticschool.vic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Statement-of-Values-and-School-Philosophy-Policy.pdf>

3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies

Western Autistic 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 autistic students 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 and individual engagement strategies used by our school is included below:

Universal

- we maintain high and consistent expectations of all staff, students and parents and carers
- we prioritise positive relationships between staff and students, recognising the fundamental role this plays in building and sustaining student wellbeing
- we nurture a culture that is inclusive, engaging, and supportive and that embraces and celebrates diversity and empowers all students to participate and feel valued
- we welcome all parents/carers and are responsive to them as partners in learning
- we analyse and respond to a range of school data such as attendance, parent survey data, student management data and school level assessment data
- we deliver teaching and learning programs tailored to the interests, strengths, and aspirations of individual students
- teachers at Western Autistic School use the WAS Teaching and Learning framework as an explicit, common, and shared model of instruction to ensure that evidenced-based, high impact teaching practices are incorporated into all lessons
- teachers at Western Autistic School adopt a broad range of teaching and autism specific 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
- we deliver 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 communication to parents
- we 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 Student Support Group meetings where possible. Students are also encouraged to speak with their teachers, Leading Teacher, Assistant Principal and Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns
- we create opportunities for cross—age connections amongst students through school Family Days, Harmony Day, and End of Year Concerts
- we are proud to have an ‘open door’ policy where students and staff are partners in learning
- 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

- the Wellbeing team supports teachers in monitoring the health and wellbeing of students, and act as a point of contact for students who may need additional support
- 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
- all culturally and linguistically diverse students are supported to feel safe and included in our school including through their teaching team and through speech therapy models
- we support learning and wellbeing outcomes of students from refugee backgrounds through contact with families through our school Social Worker and referral to external supports as appropriate
- we provide a positive and respectful learning environment for our students who identify as LGBTIQ+ and follow the Department’s policy on all students in Out of Home Care, ensuring they are supported in accordance with the Department’s policy on [Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care](#)
- all students 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
- 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
- staff will apply a trauma-informed approach to working with students who have experienced trauma

Individual

- Student Support Groups, see:
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/participation/pages/supportgroups.aspx>
- Individual Learning Plan and Behaviour Support Plan
- Program for Students with Disabilities
- referral to Student Wellbeing Team
- referral to Child First, Headspace
- Lookout
- referral to DET Attendance Officer

Western Autistic 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 support such as council-based youth and family services, other allied health professionals, headspace, child, and adolescent mental health services or Child First.

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 agreed attendance improvement goals 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

Western Autistic School is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally, and socially. Whole school leadership plays a significant role in developing and implementing strategies to help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. Western Autistic 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
- engagement with families.

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 where possible. 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 learn 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.

6. Student behavioural expectations and management

All students at the school have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder, and delayed development of communication skills.

Staff continuously promote and model how to be safe and how to treat others with respect. Through building student communication skills, staff encourage students to express their likes, dislikes, wants, and needs. By creating school programs which build on student strengths and interests, teachers create safe and welcoming environments and strive to build peer relationships and connections.

The school understands student behaviour as a form of communication, and always strives to address communication gaps whilst supporting the student with positive strategies such as modelling, redirection, use of visuals, scripts, and social stories.

The school works in close collaboration with families and allied health professionals to understand students and their communication needs and styles, and where appropriate supports this understanding through detailed case conferences, regulation, and response plans.

Bullying will be managed in accordance with our Bullying Prevention Policy.

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

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

Corporal punishment is prohibited by law and will not be used in any circumstance at our school.

7. Engaging with families

Western Autistic 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 Statement of Values and School Philosophy Policy and DET policies
- providing parent volunteer opportunities so that families can contribute to school activities
- involving families with school events and celebrations

- 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

Western Autistic 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:

- staff opinion data
- attendance data
- individual student level data
- whole school wellbeing data incidents data
- school reports
- parent survey
- CASES21 / EduSafe Plus.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

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

- [Attendance](#)
- [Child Safe Standards](#)
- [Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care](#)
- [Students with Disability](#)
- [LGBTIQ 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
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Bullying Prevention Policy

REVIEW CYCLE AND EVALUATION

Policy last reviewed	November 2023
Consultation	School Newsletter Term 4, 2023 Sent to School Council 10/11/23.
Approved by	Principal Adele Field
Next scheduled review date	November 2025