

STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact 9803 4590 or burwood.east.sds@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.

Burwood East SDS (BESDS) 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

Burwood East Special Developmental School is a specialist government school located in the City of Whitehorse within the North Eastern Region of Victoria. The school zone covers eastern suburbs located in the cities of Whitehorse, Knox, Maroondah, Boroondara, Manningham and Monash,

including the suburbs of Nunawading, Blackburn, Box Hill, Burwood, Balwyn, Hawthorn, Kew, Doncaster, Templestowe, and Vermont South. Eligible school-aged students living within the designated transport zone have access to a transport service.

The school is in a suburban area surrounded by houses at the end of a no-through road in an attractive and secure environment with extensive outdoor learning spaces. The school has begun to undertake major rebuilding projects involving the buildings and grounds with an emphasis on tailoring the teaching spaces to suit the learning needs of the students.

Currently, the school has three buildings, two of which contain classrooms and specialist spaces and an administration wing with staff facilities, a multipurpose space, sensory room and student kitchen. The classroom buildings are divided into two sections; a lower/middle Primary section and an upper primary and Secondary section. Teaching spaces are stimulating and well-equipped.

BESDS provides educational programs for students assessed with a moderate to severe intellectual disability. The school currently has 75 school-age students, and 12 preschool students in the Early Education Program. Individual Education Plans are developed by the teaching staff for each student in conjunction with families and therapists. Emphasis on current curriculum initiatives and priorities ensures that students are provided with the maximum opportunity for improved learning outcomes.

Burwood East SDS is a culturally diverse community with over 30% of families having a language background other than English. We are proud of our diverse and inclusive school community. We strive to ensure that families build a sense of belonging in our school community. At BESDS we value families as important contributors to our community and actively seek and value parent input.

2. School values, philosophy and vision

Burwood East Special Developmental School's Statement of Values and School Philosophy is integral to our work 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 being a communicator, being a learner and being safe at every opportunity.

Our school's vision is to promote independence through active learning.

Our Statement of Values is available online at: <https://www.besds.vic.edu.au/>.

3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies

Burwood East Special Developmental 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 acknowledge that some students may need extra social, emotional or educational support at school, and we have strategies in place to provide them with the support they need.

A summary of the universal (tier 1 supports the whole of school), targeted (tier 2 group-specific supports) and individual engagement strategies (tier 3 supports) used by our school is included below:

Universal

- high and consistent expectations of all staff, students and parents and carers
- prioritising 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
- positive relationships developed with students and their families/carers through open communication via student communication diaries, email, newsletters, and the school management system
- termly Student Support Group meetings (SSGs) are held to monitor student wellbeing and engagement
- Individual Student Learning Plans (ILPs) are developed with families/carers addressing individual wellbeing needs, interests and skills, curriculum content, and individual learning goals
- 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
- monitoring student attendance and implementing attendance improvement strategies at a whole-school, cohort, and individual level
- student attendance is recorded and monitored daily
- late arrival and early departure records
- follow up phone calls and emails to families if an absence has not been reported
- teachers at BESDS use a literacy 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 literacy lessons
- teachers at BESDS 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
- 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 student support groups and individual learning plans
- we engage in school-wide positive behaviour support with our staff and students, which includes programs such as:
 - Respectful Relationships
 - SoSAFE!
 - Safe Schools
- the SWPBS approach teaches directly and formally how to behave in safe and respectful ways throughout the school, with an emphasis on teaching and encouraging positive social skills and respectful behaviour. This is paired with positive attention through a reward system whereby acknowledgements are immediate and labelled with behaviour-specific praise
- positive behaviour is encouraged by:
 - the use of motivators, reinforcement, and praise for appropriate learning behaviours

- the provision of programs to practise social behaviours (e.g., eating/drinking appropriately, social skills development, class programs, specialist programs, cooking programs, ASDAN programs)
- the provision of opportunities to practice pro-social behaviour in the community (e.g., Meals on Wheels, community sports, gardening programs, excursions, camps)
- positive behaviour and student achievement is acknowledged in the classroom and formally in school assemblies and communication to parents
- the development of social stories and video models to promote positive and appropriate behaviour
- promotion of emotional intelligence and well-being with the Kimochis program, a classroom-based program that supports social and emotional learning by teaching children the skills to understand their emotions, peacefully communicate feelings to others, develop positive relationships, manage conflicts and challenges, and make and keep friends
- creating a culture that is inclusive, engaging, and supportive and that embraces and celebrates diversity and empowers students to participate and feel valued
- promotion of gender equality, respectful relationships, and school values
- Specialist programs including music, art, physical education, creative movement, and therapy programs
- a collaborative team approach: Teachers, Education Support Officers, Speech Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapist, Family Support Coordinator, Mental Health Practitioner
- appropriate professional development for staff in child safety, health management, curriculum, teaching and learning, trauma-informed approach to engaging students in learning and promoting student wellbeing.

Targeted

- 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 – refer to our Aboriginal Learning Wellbeing and Safety School Action Plan for further information
- 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 Education Plan and a Student Support Group (SSG) and being referred to Student Support Services for an Educational Needs Assessment
- each class group has a Section Coordinator, a senior teacher responsible for their class, who monitors the health and well-being of students in their section and acts as a point of contact for students who may need additional support. They may offer well-being support, including referral to the Mental Health Practitioner, therapy team, and/or Family Support Coordinator
- when referrals occur, therapy staff may implement programs such as *We Thinkers!*, *Zones of Regulation* and/or *The Alert Program* to support student wellbeing
- wellbeing and health staff will undertake health promotion and social skills development in response to needs identified by student well-being data, classroom teachers, or other school staff

- staff will undergo appropriate professional development and apply a trauma-informed approach to working with students who have experienced trauma
- in collaboration with families/carers, all students in their final year of schooling are supported to transition from BESDS into an appropriate pathway to support and plan for their future
- special responsibilities and activities for students that promote student agency and well-being (e.g., senior choir, Meals on Wheels, recycling monitors, lunch orders, bell monitors)
- the use of Kimochis as preventative approach in small groups to focus on specific skills that are flagged for students who require extra support.

Individual

BESDS implements a range of strategies that support and promote individual engagement. These can include:

- meeting with student and their parent/carer to talk about how best to help the student engage with school
- developing a Behaviour Support Plan
- targeted behaviour intervention planning in the implementation of Prevent, Teach, Reinforce – School Based individualized Positive Behaviour Support plans to reinforce positive behaviours
- considering if any environmental changes need to be made, for example changing the classroom set up
- The development of individual social stories and video models to promote positive and appropriate behaviour
- when referrals occur, therapy staff may implement programs such as We Thinkers!, Zones of Regulation and/or The Alert Program to support student wellbeing
- The development of appropriate individualised communication systems/programs
- Use of the Kimochis program for students who need intensive, individualized intervention to further develop their emotional intelligence skills
- referring the student to:
 - school-based wellbeing supports
 - Student Support 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
- engaging with our regional Koorie Engagement Support Officers
- running regular Student Support Group meetings for all students with complex needs that require ongoing support and monitoring
- referring to the Family Support Coordinator to provide support for families/carers by linking them with community-based resources. Families may be linked with external agencies for longer-term support that is outside the educational needs of students such as respite, family support and other family specific issues

- referring the family/carers to appropriate external supports such as council-based youth and family services, other allied health professionals, headspace, child and adolescent mental health services or The Orange Door

4. Identifying students in need of support

Burwood East SDS is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally, and socially. Staff at BESDS play a significant role in developing and implementing strategies help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing.

Burwood East SDS will utilise the following information and strategies to identify students in need of extra emotional, social or educational support:

- personal, health and learning information gathered upon enrolment attendance records
- attendance rates
- observations by school staff such as changes in engagement, behaviour, self-care, social connectedness and motivation
- engagement with families
- collaboration with schools where students are dual-enrolled
- issues raised at staff meeting regarding student wellbeing and safety
- engagement with student families
- working with external agencies e.g., DFFH, Child Protection, The Orange Door, Australian Childhood Foundation, Foundation House.

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:

- display positive behaviours that demonstrate responsibility, respect and safety for themselves, their peers, their teachers, and all other members of the school community
- participate fully in their education
- respect the rights of others to learn, to contribute to an engaging educational experience for themselves and other students
- Learn positive behaviours which contribute to the educational, social, emotional, and physical development of themselves and those around them. Students are actively supported by staff to achieve this goal

- express their needs, choices, interests, and decisions

Burwood East SDS parents/carers are expected to:

- promote positive educational outcomes for their child by taking an active interest in their child's educational progress
- work with the school by participating in regular and constructive communication with school staff regarding their child's learning and wellbeing
- actively support their child's engagement in the school environment
- support the school in maintaining an inclusive, safe, and respectful learning environment for all students
- support their child by ensuring regular attendance and modelling positive and respectful behaviour.

6. Student behavioural expectations and management

Burwood East SDS promotes a learning environment where students and staff are respected, and self-worth and dignity are strongly advocated. The promotion of positive student behaviour, self-esteem, emotional well-being, tolerance, and respect is encouraged. A strong ethos of parent and family support and community involvement is evident throughout the school.

Behavioural expectations of students are grounded in our school's Statement of Values and School Philosophy policy (<https://www.besds.vic.edu.au/>).

Behavioural Expectations

At Burwood East SDS, we engage in School Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) with our staff and students. School Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) is an evidence-based framework that helps schools to improve the behavioural, social, emotional and learning development for students. The SWPBS framework helps to develop positive, safe, supportive learning cultures.

SWBPS at BESDS will:

- increase respectful and positive behaviour
- improve social-emotional wellbeing
- increase positive, respectful relationships
- create a more predictable learning environment with improved perceptions of safety

The BESDS school-wide positive behaviour matrix has identified areas which all have key behavioural expectations requiring explicit teaching of behaviours.

All staff are expected to use the BESDS Matrix to encourage expected behaviours by;

- Posting the matrix prominently in the classroom
- Consistently recognising and acknowledging positive behaviours
- Pairing acknowledgements with behaviour specific praise
- Referring to the school-wide matrix to reinforce consistency and common language
- Establishing classroom structures and routines that are reinforced using acknowledgements of expected behaviours from the matrix
- Teaching and modelling all expected behaviours in the matrix
- Rewarding students with reward tickets
- Facilitating students to exchange merit tokens for rewards in the 'BESDS shop'

Once taught, staff are expected to actively monitor students and encourage positive student behaviour expectations.

Student reward tokens/tickets are used to acknowledge students who are demonstrating positive behaviours. When issuing positive behaviour rewards, behaviour specific praise must occur first.

Behaviour specific praise provides students with specific, positive feedback about how they are displaying the school values and expected behaviours.

When a student displays an expected behaviour, staff will;

- Verbally acknowledge the behaviour with the language specific to the action and the school value (see examples above)
- Refer to the visual matrix if possible
- Write student name, staff name and value displayed on a ticket
- Give the student the ticket and support them to place their ticket in the collection box

Once a week, tally student tickets and take them to the 'BESDS Shop' to exchange the tickets.

SWPBS Online Conduct

SWPBS strategies promote student online conduct and online safety. This includes explicit teaching on the use of ICT and technology, communication, and safety. BESDS will communicate behavioural expectations regarding the safe, intentional, and responsible use of digital technologies to students. The BESDS Acceptable Use Agreement (AUA) outlines student behavioural expectations regarding the safe, intentional, and responsible use of digital technologies.

Behaviour management

Students who attend a special school setting may at times exhibit behaviours that are of concern. We see all behaviour as a form of communication and/or sensory difficulties, health, or medical issues.

At Burwood East SDS we believe that all behaviour has a specific function/purpose. We recognise that students with an intellectual developmental disorder (intellectual disability) may have impairment in the areas of communication and social skill development; therefore, students at Burwood East SDS often require an individualised approach that focuses on understanding the individual's learning/emotional needs; having knowledge of the triggers that give rise to behaviours of concern; and adapting the environment and teaching strategies to avoid trigger and cater for the student's individual needs.

Interventions targeting specific needs may be identified within a subgroup of students. Interventions are more intensely focused, allowing more time and specialised instruction for students' skill levels. Tier 2 interventions are expected to accelerate learning and minimise the impact of difficulties over time. These may include:

- Functional Behavior Thinking Template – For the Functional Based Thinking Template
- Therapy referral e.g. social story

Intensive and specialised assessment and intervention for individual students are based on the severity of their difficulties. If students are making limited progress in class or at Tier 2 level, this may warrant Tier 3 supports. These may include:

- Further assessment eg. Sensory Profile, communication assessment

- Care Team Meeting eg. BESDS staff, external therapists, family members
- Prevent Teach Reinforce Behaviour Support Plan
- Safety Plan

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 (<https://www.besds.vic.edu.au/>).

When a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our school community, BESDS 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 detention, 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 and Training.

The Principal of BESDS 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

Burwood East SDS 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 encourage open communication with parents and the school community through daily diaries, telephone contact, SSG meetings, parent teacher meetings, newsletters, emails and Compass updates. We also value communication with other stakeholders such as NDIS providers, the Department of Family Fairness and Housing and other service providers.

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
- involving families with curriculum-related activities such as incursions and special events
- 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

Burwood East SDS 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:

- Attitudes to school survey
- BESDS Parent survey
- incidents data
- school reports
- other feedback sourced by the school, i.e. Compass data
- case management
- CASES21, including attendance and absence data
- SOCS

BESDS 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 <https://www.besds.vic.edu.au/>
- 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/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 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](#)

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	November 2025
Consultation	School Council – 17/11/2025
Approved by	Principal – <i>Helen Smith</i>
Next scheduled review date	November 2027