



Ballarat High School

Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy

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.

Ballarat 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.

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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School profile

Ballarat High School has a tradition of pursuing and recognising excellence under the motto of 'Duty Always'. Our ethos is supported by our core values of Pride, Respect & Responsibility.

Ballarat High School is a 7-12 educational community, with a strong focus on a team structure to support the learner. We have three sub-schools which support students through their time at Ballarat High School. Students are supported by Team Leaders at each year level who provide wellbeing and engagement support to students.

At the Senior Years (Years 10, 11 and 12), students are offered a wide range of educational pathways and subjects. In Years 10, 11 and 12, a wide choice of elective subjects are offered each semester. Students are encouraged to consider a range of options in choosing their pathway, to achieve educational and post schooling goals. VCE, VET and VCAL are offered as options and the students receive individual guidance in their choice of subjects through the student's learning mentor and the MIPs (Managed Individual Pathways) staff. The aim is to develop a pathway and program that best suits the individual's needs and goals.

Caring for our students to support high learning outcomes is our priority. Staff are encouraged to build strong relationships with students and their families and keep them informed of progress through formal reporting processes and informal contact. Each student has a Learning Mentor, who works with them to ensure the development of effective learning skills and also provides a key support person for each student. In addition to the teaching staff, there is a Student Wellbeing team, consisting of the Youth Counsellors, Chaplain, School Sickbay Attendant and the Assistant Principals who are available to provide specialist support to students as necessary.

Ballarat High School serves its local community, with students drawn from the neighbourhood community. It offers a broad comprehensive education, which provides students with personalised learning leading to successful post school pathways. At Ballarat High School, we offer a number of extra-curricula activities, such as an extensive music program, debating, school productions and after school sport competitions, including rowing. We strongly encourage all students to

take advantage of these opportunities and expand their experiences outside of the classroom.

School values, philosophy and vision

Ballarat High 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 pride, respect and responsibility at every opportunity.

Our school's vision

Ballarat High School is a learning community where every person is valued, respected and challenged as a learner.

School values

Our ethos at Ballarat High School is supported by our core values of Pride, Respect and Responsibility. It is expected that these values are shared and demonstrated by all members of our school community.

PRIDE is demonstrated by:

- Perseverance: finishing what one starts, not giving up and seeing value in consistent effort
- Initiative: tackling a task before you are asked, being proactive, taking responsibility for your own learning

RESPECT is demonstrated by our:

- Tolerance: Acceptance of other people's opinion, patience, see another's point of view, working with others, being non-judgemental
- Belief: Self- belief, confidence, positive talk, growth mindset
- Respect: For people and property, regard for the feelings of others, using manners, value people's opinions and actions

RESPONSIBILITY is demonstrated by our:

- Teamwork: Working with others to achieve a common goal, being aware of each team member's strengths, cooperation, collaboration
- Honesty: Being true to oneself and others, owning your behaviour, to be truthful and willing to take responsibility.
- Involvement: Willing to have a go and try new and different things, active participation in your learning.

Wellbeing and engagement strategies

Ballarat High School has developed a range of strategies to promote engagement, an inclusive and safe environment, positive behaviour, and respectful relationships for all students in our school. We recognise the importance of student friendships and peer support in helping children and students feel safe and less isolated.

We acknowledge that some students may need extra social, emotional or educational support at school, and that the needs of students will change over time as they grow and learn.

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

Universal

- high and consistent expectations of all staff, students and parents and carers
- implementation of a school wide Mental Health Action plan led by the schools Mental Health Practitioner
- 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
- deliver a broad curriculum including VET programs, VCE and VCAL to ensure that students are able to choose subjects and programs that are tailored to their interests, strengths and aspirations
- teachers at Ballarat High School use an instructional model to ensure an explicit, common and shared model of instruction to ensure that evidenced-based, high yield teaching practices are incorporated into all lessons

- teachers at Ballarat 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
- 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 Leadership team and other forums including leadership programs and focus groups. Students are also encouraged to speak with their teachers, Team Leaders, Assistant Principal and Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns.
- create opportunities for cross—age connections amongst students through school plays, athletics, music programs, Energy breakthrough and peer support programs
- all students are welcome to self-refer to Student Wellbeing, School Nurse, School Chaplain, Team 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
- programs, incursions and excursions developed to address issue specific needs or behaviour (i.e. social skills programs cybersafety etc)
- provision breakfast, lunch and snack opportunities for students without access to food.
- opportunities for student inclusion (i.e. sports teams, clubs, recess and lunchtime activities)
- peer support program

- 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. An anonymous online program, Stymie, supports students to be Upstanders and have a voice.

Targeted

- each student group has a Team Leader who monitor the health and wellbeing of students in their student group, 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. Ballarat High School has a staff member who supports Koorie students to have an Individual Education Plan to be in place and to engage with their culture.
- 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 participation in our Cultural support group.
- 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. Ballarat High School have a 'Pride' group which acts as a support group for LGBTIQ+ students and allies. IDAHOBIT day is recognised as a school wide celebration and awareness day
- 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
- 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. The school has a Leading Teacher (Disability Inclusion) that drives the support of students as identified as having learning challenges.

- 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
- 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
- all students from Year 10 and above will be assisted to develop a Career Action Plan, with targeted goals and support to plan for their future through the schools two MIPs staff.
- Ballarat High School assists students to plan their Year 10 work experience, supported by their Career Action Plan

Individual

Ballarat High 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
- Implementation of classroom supports such as additional ES one to one in class support.
- Implementation of targeted programs
- Use of external experts – eg Behavioural therapists, to work in the school to provide guidance on how the school can best support individual students.
- developing an Individual Education 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 or the schools Engagement officer.

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 Education Support Officers
- running regular Student Support Group meetings for all students:
 - with a disability
 - in Out of Home Care
 - with other complex needs that require ongoing support and monitoring.

Ballarat High School aligns with and accesses support through Department approved agencies and programs including;

- Disability Inclusion
- Mental health toolkit
- headspace
- Navigator
- LOOKOUT

Identifying students in need of support

Ballarat High School is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. The Student Wellbeing team plays a significant role in developing and implementing strategies help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. Ballarat High 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, including through the anonymous online reporting tool, Stymie.
- Parent referrals

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 their Team Leader, trusted staff member or member of the school leadership team. Further information about raising a complaint or concern is available in our Complaints Policy.

Student behavioural expectations and management

Behavioural expectations of students are grounded in our school's Statement of Values/Student code of conduct. Ballarat High School is introducing the School Wide Positive Behaviour Supports (SWPBS) program to embed a school wide approach to the development of agreed expected behaviours.

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, Ballarat High 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 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
- withdrawal of privileges
- referral to the Team Leader
- 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 Ballarat 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.

Engaging with families

Ballarat 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 school website
- maintaining an open, respectful line of communication between parents and staff
- 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.

Evaluation

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

- student survey data
- incidents data – Compass
- Stymie – Anonymous online reporting tool
- school reports
- parent survey
- case management
- CASES21, including attendance and absence data
- SOCS

Ballarat 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
- 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:

- [Child Safety Policy](#)
- [Bullying Prevention Policy](#)
- [Inclusion and Diversity Policy](#)
- [Statement of Values and School Philosophy](#)

Review cycle and evaluation

Approval date	August 2025
Person responsible	Principal
Next review date	August 2027



If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Ballarat High School on (03) 5338 9000 or ballarat.hs@education.vic.gov.au