

STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact the General Office on (03) 9347 2022.

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.

University 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.

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

The University High School serves approximately 1,980 students, most of whom reside locally. A proportion of the school's enrolment comes from further afield, either through the Elizabeth Blackburn School of Sciences or due to sibling claims. The school population reflects a broad socio-economic, cultural, and ethnic diversity, and the school is genuinely committed to fostering this diversity. The school operates on two campuses: a Years 7–8 and 10–12 campus on Story Street, and a Year 9 campus on Lonsdale Street. Constantly evolving, the school values its rich traditions while embracing the challenges of the future. University High School recognises a dynamic community of staff, students, and parents who engage in active partnerships. We value individual worth and achievement, holistic well-being, and the pursuit of excellence.

The Sub School Structure

For pastoral care of students and for administrative effectiveness, The University High School is divided into five year level sub-schools: Year 7, Year 8, Year 9, Year 10 and VCE (Years 11 & 12). Each of the Year levels has a Head of Sub-school and Coordinators who attend to academic and pastoral care needs of all students. In addition, the University High school has 4 houses: Coleman, Gulam, Johnston and Triggs. The four houses have been named in honour of former students of The University High School. The houses form the basis for the school's major sporting competitions (athletics and swimming) and other activities.

2. School values, philosophy and vision

Since its establishment in 1910, The University High School has built a distinctive tradition. The school is constantly evolving, valuing rich traditions of the past whilst embracing the challenges of the future.

A Dynamic school community, active partnership between staff, students, parents and the broader community enhance student learning and opportunities. The school focuses on developing individual worth and achievement, the comprehensive wellbeing of the whole person and pursuit of excellence.

The school's core values are:

Curiosity

- We are open to new ideas about the world and each other. We seek to learn, explore and understand.

Kindness

- We treat each other and our world with respect, humanity and empathy.

Excellence

- We uphold high standards, challenging ourselves to grow in all we do. We persevere and show resilience to be our best.

Connection

- We know that we are stronger together. We work to ensure that all belong equally in our community.

New students readily adopt the school's culture of respect for learning and the individual. Classroom environments are characterised by positive student-teacher relationships.

Our Statement of Values is [available online](#).

3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies

University 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

- Teachers at University High School are working towards using Learning Culture 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 lessons
- High and consistent expectations of all staff, students and parents and carers
- Prioritise positive relationships between staff and students, recognising the fundamental role this plays in building and sustaining student wellbeing
- Creating a culture that is inclusive, engaging and supportive and that embraces and celebrates diversity and empowers all students to participate and feel valued
- Welcoming all parents/carers and aim at 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 VCE and VET programs to ensure that students are able to choose subjects and programs that are tailored to their interests, strengths and aspirations. Our careers program informs students about post secondary pathways.
- University High School is working to 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 are incorporated into our curriculum and promoted to students, staff and parents/carers so that they are shared and celebrated as the foundation of our school community
- Carefully planned transition programs to support students moving into different stages of their schooling
- Positive behaviours and achievements are proudly celebrated in classrooms, assemblies, as well as communicated to parents.

- Monitor student attendance data and implement attendance improvement strategies at a whole-school, cohort and individual level
- Students have the opportunity to contribute to and provide feedback on decisions about school operations through the Student Representative Council and student leaders and other forums including year group meetings and Peer Support Groups. Students are also encouraged to speak with their teachers, Sub-school coordinators, Assistant Principal and Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns
- The school has introduced a Buddy Program, whereby Year 9 students receive Peer Support Training through the Let's Talk Program. This initiative builds the capacity of our Year 9 students to lead others and support the Year 7 transition program during Orientation Day and at the beginning of the school year. In addition, the school runs a Sport Coaching Peer Support Program in which Year 10 students, under teacher supervision, coach students in Years 7 and 8 in preparation for the Sports Day competitions held in Terms 1, 2, and 3.
- 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.
- Create opportunities for cross—age connections amongst students through interest and hobby groups, the school musical, sport, instrumental music program, student clubs and student leadership groups.
- All students are actively encouraged to contact the Student Wellbeing Team, Mental Health Practitioner, Sub-school Coordinators, 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 and the Berry Street Education Model (BSEM) with our staff and students
- Programs, incursions and excursions developed to address issue specific behaviour (i.e. anger management programs, mindfulness, building friendships)
- Opportunities for student inclusion (i.e. sports teams, student interest groups, clubs, club for neurodiverse students, gym, recess and lunchtime activities)

Targeted

- The school will arrange regular meetings between the student body, including SRC members and the principal class to receive insights, advice and recommendations to support improvements in the maintenance of the school's facilities, in particular the student toilets.
- Each year group has a Year Group Leader/Coordinator, a senior teacher responsible for their year, who monitors the health and wellbeing of students in their year, and acts as a point of contact for students who may need additional support
- Koorie students are supported to fully engage in their education, in a positive learning environment that understands and appreciates the strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture
- Our English as an Additional Language (EAL) students are supported through our dedicated EAL program. All culturally and linguistically diverse students are supported to feel safe and included at our school, including through the celebration of Culture Week and other special events relevant to our school community, eg. acknowledging and celebrating Ramadan, Eid, and Diwali.
- We support learning and wellbeing outcomes of students from refugee backgrounds through targeted information events held in cooperation with Drummond Street Services.

- We provide a positive and respectful learning environment for our students who identify as LGBTIQ+ and follow the Department of Education’s (the Department) policy on [LGBTIQ Student Support](#)
- All students in Out of Home Care are supported in accordance with the Department’s policy on [Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care](#) including being appointed a Learning Mentor, having an Individual Learning Plan and a Student Support Group (SSG) and being referred to Student Support Services for an Educational Needs Assessment
- 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
- 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
- University High School assists students to plan their Year 10 work experience, supported by their Career Action Plan

Individual

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

- Public recognition of student achievement, for example exemplary conduct, academics, sporting achievements, community engagement, etc.
- 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 Education Plan](#) and/or a [Behaviour Support Plan](#)
- Considering if any environmental changes need to be made, for example changing the classroom set up
- Referring the student to:
 - school-based wellbeing supports
 - [Student Support Services](#)
 - appropriate external supports such as council based youth and family services, other allied health professionals, [headspace](#), child and adolescent mental health services or ChildFirst
 - re-engagement programs such as [Navigator](#)

Where necessary the school will support the student’s family to engage by:

- Being responsive and sensitive to changes in the student’s circumstances and health and wellbeing

- Collaborating, where appropriate and with the support of the student and their family, with any external allied health professionals, services or agencies that are supporting the student
- Monitoring individual student attendance and developing an Attendance Improvement Plans in collaboration with the student and their family; based on student attendance the school implements targeted interventions in response to varying levels of absence.
- 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

University High School is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. The Sub-school and Student Wellbeing team plays a significant role in developing and implementing strategies to help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. University 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

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, discrimination or intimidation
- express their ideas, feelings and concerns.

Students have the responsibility to:

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

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

6. Student behavioural expectations and management

Behavioural expectations of students, staff and families are grounded in our school's Statement of Values.

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 a number of strategies including those outlined below as well as our Bullying Prevention Policy.

When a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our school community, University 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 implements positive and non-punitive interventions to support student behaviour before considering disciplinary measures such as after school Reflect and Reconnect sessions, 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
- Reflect and Reconnect sessions (formerly referred to detentions)
- Behaviour support and intervention meetings
- Internal and external suspension
- Expulsion

Where appropriate, the school may liaise with police authorities as part of the resolution process.

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 eight or younger will be expelled without the approval of the Secretary of the Department of Education and Training.

The Principal of University 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

University 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 work hard to create successful partnerships with parents and carers by:

- Ensuring that all parents have access to our school policies and procedures, available on our school website
- Maintaining an open, respectful line of communication between parents and staff, supported by our Communicating with School Staff policy.
- Providing parent volunteer opportunities so that families can contribute to school activities
- Involving families with homework and other curriculum-related activities
- Involving families in school decision making
- Coordinating resources and services from the community for families
- Including families in Student Support Groups, and developing individual plans for students.

8. Evaluation

University 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
- School reports
- Parent survey
- Case management
- CASES21, including attendance and absence data
- SOCS

University 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
- Included as annual reference in school newsletter
- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request
- Information for students on how to seek individual support is included in the Connect program and at Sub-school assemblies. (NEW)
- Raise profile of policy tenets at Sub-school assemblies
- Shared via policy updates in Principal's Report of the school's newsletter
- Shared via updates from the School Council Chair via communiqués after each meeting.

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](#)
- [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	September 2025
Consultation	SC Policy and Governance Sub-committee; School Council September 2025
Approved by	Nick Scott
Next scheduled review date	September 2027