



## **STUDENT WELLBEING & ENGAGEMENT 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

Northern School for Autism 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. Engagement strategies
- 4. Identifying students in need of support
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- 6. Student behavioural expectations and management
- 7. Engaging with families
- 8. Evaluation

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## **POLICY**

### **1. School profile**

Northern School for Autism operates on two campuses in Reservoir and Lalor.

The Reservoir Campus is a purpose-built school providing state facilities designed in line with international, autism specific, educational best practice in specialist school design. The campus caters for 200 Early and Middle Year's students, across 25 classrooms.

The school is serviced by school buses provided by the Department. Students must attend three days per week minimum and reside within the school's Designated Transport Area to access the bus service.

The Lalor Campus opened in 2012 to cater for the growing number of secondary aged students attending the school. The campus is a self-contained wing, co-located on the Peter Lalor Vocational College site and caters for 100 students, across 14 classrooms.

Shuttle buses running to and from the Reservoir Campus also service the Lalor Campus. The site is near public buses and trains which students access for travel education programs. Students also access the nearby shopping complex and a municipal leisure centre for consumer skills and swimming programs.

The school is divided into sub-schools according to the stages of schooling (age approximate)

- Early Years – 5 - 8 years (Reservoir)
- Middle Years – 9 - 12 years (Reservoir)
- Later Years – 13 - 18 years (Lalor)

### **Class Group Organisation**

Class-groups generally comprise eight to ten students of similar chronological age. Students are grouped according to developmental and educational need. Teachers and teacher aides work in partnership, to support students. Teachers are responsible for the development, delivery and evaluation of all classroom activities. Teachers and teacher aides work in teams of two or three in each classroom, and are supported by speech and occupational therapists, specialist teachers and a team of leading teachers.

### **Allied Health**

To support the implementation of the educational programs the school provides a range of specialist services including speech pathology, occupational therapy and access to student wellbeing staff. Through a team based collaborative approach, therapy provision is provided within classroom settings. Teachers and therapists work as a trans-disciplinary team to ensure that students have access to consistent and effective therapeutic programs.

### **Early Years' and Middle Year's Programs**

The Early and Middle Years' curriculum is designed to enable students to develop their communication and interpersonal skills, as well as to assist students learn to understand and self-regulate their emotions and behaviour. The core learning goals are articulated in the 'NSA Supplementary Curriculum'. This curriculum is based upon very early developmental milestones which children with ASD find challenging to reach and generalise.

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### Reservoir Campus - Facilities

- Play Therapy Room
- Music Room
- Three gyms (occupational therapy)
- Visual Art Room
- Student Kitchen
- Multi-purpose Room
- Student Library
- Classrooms with outdoor courtyards
- Secure, modern, age appropriate play-grounds with discrete, secure play areas, including bike riding tracks
- Secure perimeter

### Later Years' Program

Students in the Later Years of schooling access an educational program which is designed to support their transition from school to an adult educational setting such as TAFE, supported employment or a day service. Students complete a school-based transition program with an applied learning focus. The students participate in curriculum across the following domains:

- Literacy and Numeracy
- Work Skills – including Horticulture, Office Skills and Food Technology
- Physical Education – including gym, outdoor education and bike education
- Leisure and Recreation
- Health – including human relations, puberty, drug education, personal care, protective behaviours
- The Arts
- Travel Education
- Enterprise and Consumer Skills programs
- Career Action Plan Program (CAPs)

Accredited TAFE programs and work experience are offered to students on an as needs basis. Students who have the ability to participate in an accredited program are offered the opportunity to enrol in the Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC). Other students complete an ASDAN certificate. In their final year of school, all students are supported to transition to life beyond school.

### Lalor Campus – Facilities

- Secure, age appropriate, outdoor recreation area including shaded seating, ropes climbing course, fitness equipment, a large oval and a bike track
- Multi-purpose Room
- Student recreational room/ Library
- Student Kitchens and Canteen
- Student Garden
- Technology rich classrooms

## **2. School values, philosophy and vision**

Our 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 trust, understanding and safety.

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Our school's vision is to be a centre of excellence, and our motto is "Learning for Life".

Our *Statement of Values and School Philosophy* is available on our school website at:  
<https://www.northernautism.vic.edu.au/policies-protocols>

### 3. Wellbeing and Engagement strategies

NSA 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.

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
- 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
- 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, parent survey data, student management data and school level assessment data
- deliver a broad curriculum including VET programs and VPC to ensure that students are able to choose subjects and programs that are tailored to their interests, strengths and aspirations
- teachers at NSA use the TEACCH instructional framework to ensure an explicit, common and shared model of instruction ensuring evidenced-based, high yield teaching practices are incorporated into all lessons
- teachers at NSA 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 parent/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 behaviour and student achievement are 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
- creating opportunities for cross-age connections amongst students through school concerts, athletics, music programs and peer support programs
- encouraging students to self-refer to the classroom teacher or another trusted adult within the school, such as the 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
- engaging in school wide positive behaviour support with our staff and students, which includes programs such as:
  - Respectful Relationships
  - Bully Stoppers
  - Safe Schools
- programs, incursions and excursions developed to address issue specific behaviour (i.e. anger management programs)
- opportunities for student inclusion (i.e. sports teams, lunchtime activities).

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## Targeted

- each year group has a Team Leader, a senior teacher responsible for their year, who monitors the health and wellbeing of students in their year, and act as a point of contact for students who may need additional support
- 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
- 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 *Child Safety Policy & Koorie Education Policy* for further information
- we provide a positive and respectful learning environment for our students who identify as LGBTIQA+ and follow the Department's policy on LGBTIQA+ 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
- 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

## Individual

NSA 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 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](#)
  - [Programs for Students with Disabilities](#)
  - [LOOKOUT \(Education Support Centres\)](#)

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

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- monitoring individual student attendance and develop strategies to improve attendance 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**

NSA is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. The Leadership team plays a significant role in developing and implementing strategies to help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. NSA 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 data
- suspension data (if applicable)
- engagement with families
- self-referrals or referrals from peers
- liaison with Case Workers, Child Protection and NDIA workers

#### **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:

- 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

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## 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 this policy. Bullying will be managed in accordance with our Bullying Prevention & Response Policy.

When a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our school community, Northern School for Autism 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 detention, withdrawal of privileges or withdrawal from class. At NSA the teaching team will work with allied health professional and the Leadership Team to find the function of the behaviour. The teaching team will then be responsible for teaching the appropriate skill/s.

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.

NSA's staged response is part of our *School Wide Positive Behaviour Support Policy*.

### Tier 1 strategies

Student profiles are completed for all students to provide teachers with information in regard to students' preferences and interests. Individual Learning Plan (ILP) folders will be available to teachers to read to familiarise themselves with the students in their class-group. In their daily work teachers and their teams are required to:

- Devise and implement ILP's.
- Teach to the hidden curriculum (Core and Maintenance Goals).
- Provide a structured environment.
- Use visual supports.
- Use positive reinforcers including motivators.
- Understand what triggers and calms behaviours of concern.
- Implement communication systems and sensory diets.
- Update student profiles and BSPs.
- Use behaviour logs to track the frequency, duration and intensity of behaviours of concern.

### Tier 2 Strategies

Tier 2 strategies are implemented with the advice and support of a member of the leadership team.

- Re-patterning
- Overcorrection
- Withholding
- Time Away

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- Consequences
- Physical Support

### Tier 3 strategies

Tier 3 strategies may only be implemented upon the advice and support of a member of the leadership team.

- Behaviour Support Plan (BSP).
- Case management.
- Withdrawal from some programs.
- Part time attendance.
- Alternative program.

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 NSA 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**

NSA 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/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 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**

NSA 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:

- Incidents Data

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- School Reports
- Parent Survey
- Case Management
- CASES21, including attendance and absence data
- SOCS

NSA will also regularly monitor available data dashboards and ensure any wellbeing or engagement issues are acted upon in a timely manner and any intervention occurs as soon as possible. If a student is considered “at risk” due to high absences, the classroom teacher will email Principal and Assistant Principal weekly regarding how many days the student attended this week.

All information is recorded in student welfare file. The Principal and Assistant Principal will communicate with DFFH or other agencies involved

## 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 Packs
- 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](#)

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the school’s:

- *Child Safety Policy*
- *Attendance Policy*

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- *Bullying Prevention & Response Policy*
- *Duty of Care Policy*
- *Inclusion & Diversity Policy*
- *Digital Learning in Schools Policy*
- *Koorie Education Policy*
- *Mobile Phones – Student Use Policy*
- *Statement of Values & School Philosophy*

## REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	Nov 2024
Consultation	5 Dec 2024 sent to School Council for Consultation <i>Consultation on this policy is mandatory.</i>
Approved by	Principal on 5 Dec 2024
Next scheduled review date	Jul 2026 – <i>the mandatory review cycle for this policy is 2 years or if guidelines change</i>

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