Student Engagement and Wellbeing

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.

Sunshine Special Developmental School (SDS) 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 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
5. Student rights and responsibilities
6. Student behavioural expectations
7. Engaging with families
8. Evaluation

POLICY

1. School profile

Located in the Western Suburbs of Melbourne, Sunshine SDS has an enrolment of approximately 170 students with moderate to profound intellectual disabilities. The school has a commitment to inclusive education and therefore we have some primary aged students attending Baserooms at Sunshine Heights Primary School and Ardeer Primary School.

The main campus at Ivory Court is the administrative hub of the school and supports 155 students across all stages of learning. Students move through each Learning Centre of the school within pathways that reflect their individual needs. The school offers a broad range of specialist programs; these include visual art, library, dance, performing arts and physical education. Staff work within collaborative teams which include physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech pathologists who support the implementation of priority learning.

2. School Vision and Values

School Vision

'Excellence in education for every student, every day, without exception.'

School Values

Sunshine Special Developmental School values and is committed to the promotion of: -

- **Collaboration** – We take collective responsibility to reflect on and improve instructional practice for student learning growth
- **Respect** – We demonstrate high standards of professional integrity, trust and commitment
- **Courage** – We challenge ourselves with a spirit of open mindedness, honesty and optimism
- **Persistence** – We hold firm to our purpose, positively approaching hardships and challenges
- **Learning** – We strive for excellence in the achievement of knowledge and skills

Student and Staff Teaching Expectations for Positive Learning Support

- Be Safe
- Be a friend
- Be a learner
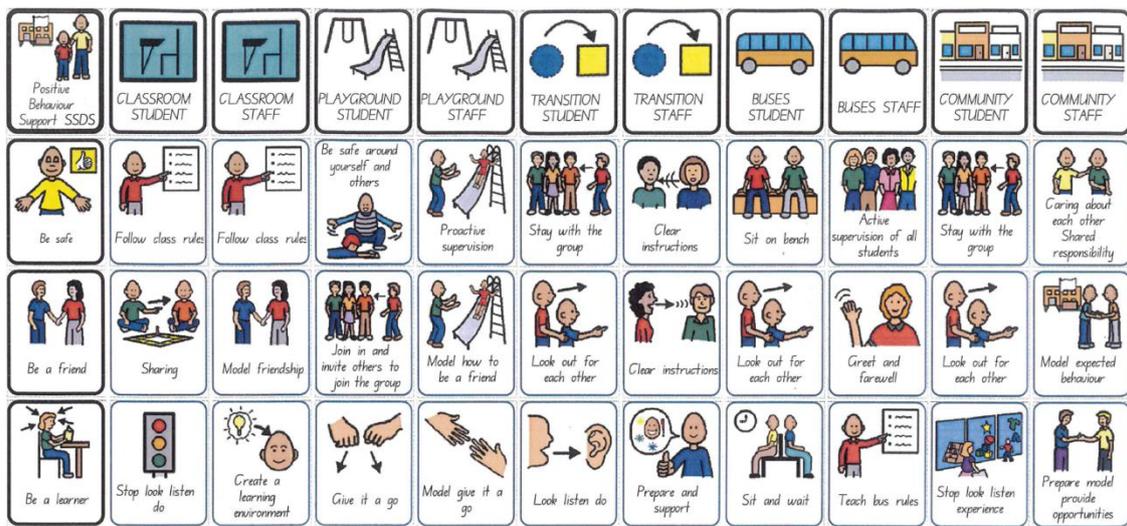
Principles for Health and Wellbeing

At Sunshine SDS we uphold the following principles:

Principle 1 – Maximise access and inclusion to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged

Principle 2 – A focus on outcomes by designing, delivering, evaluating and improving education and support services

Principle 3 – Evidence informed and reflective practice

Principle 4 – Deliver a holistic approach to support staff to work collaboratively and use multidisciplinary approaches

Principle 5 – Person centred and family sensitive practice to empower communities to lead and sustain healthy lives

Principle 6 – Develop and nurture partnerships with families and communities

Principle 7 – Cultural competence by effectively communicating with people across cultures

3. Engagement strategies

Sunshine SDS 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.

To realise our vision, our school has in place a range of strategies to promote engagement, positive learning and respectful relationships for all students at our school. We recognise that some students, as a group or as individuals may need extra social, emotional or educational support to flourish at school.

The partnership and communication between home and school is central to student attendance and effective engagement in instruction and learning. Student engagement can be defined by three interrelated components: behavioural, emotional and cognitive.

- **Positive learning engagement** refers to student's participation in education, including the academic, social and extracurricular activities within the school program
- **Emotional engagement** encompasses student's emotional responses while in the classroom and school environment. It defines the student's sense of belonging and connectedness to the school
- **Cognitive engagement** relates to students' investment in learning and their intrinsic motivation and self-regulation

Key Strategies and tools for engagement include:

- **1:1 iPad for staff and students** – promotes whole school modelling communication and promotion of student voice using Proloquo2Go, integrates technology into learning programs and supports assessment and reporting processes
- **Seesaw –** is a communication portal which provides parents the opportunity to view their child's/young person's learning through video and photograph. Seesaw is also used as a communication tool for our Culturally and Linguistically Diverse families and as an assessment tool for teachers to monitor learning progress.
- **Individual Learning Plans (ILP)** – Supported by evidence-based data and developed in consultation with parents/caregivers, this identifies priority learning aligned to the Victorian Curriculum and informs classroom curriculum design
- **Sensory Programs** – Optimise learning readiness, identifying specific strategies implemented to assist in regulating behaviour for increased engagement in learning
- **Classroom Environments and Visual Supports** – to support students learning and compliment primary prevention strategies, classroom and school environments are structured in a range of ways to accommodate differentiated learning such as classroom learning zones. Visual supports are provided within the classroom and in all external learning spaces to ensure students have a voice. Visual supports can range from Proloquo2go core words, individual symbol stick symbols, and a range of Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) systems.
- **Technology** – Compliments the learning styles of many students, enables broader access to the curriculum and promotes increased engagement and motivation
- **Enrichment Programs** – Cater to students' personal strengths and interests and currently include performing arts, visual art, physical education, dance and library
- **Inclusion** – Students based at local primary schools (within Baserooms) are provided with inclusion opportunities where appropriate within the host school
- **Variety of contexts for learning** – Students across the whole school are offered the opportunity to participate in engaging activities external to their classroom. These are student lead activities which focus on motivation, engagement and connection to real learning in a range of environments.
- **Camp** – Primary Years and Secondary Years students have the opportunity to attend an annual camp

- **Electives** – Secondary Years students access weekly electives across the school where they participate in a variety of programs based on interests and strengths which are aligned to post school options

Universal:

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

- high and consistent expectations of all staff, students and parents/guardians
- 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
- welcoming all parents/guardians 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 which includes subjects and programs that are tailored to students' interests, strengths and aspirations
- teachers at Sunshine SDS use the school's instructional framework to ensure an explicit, common and shared model of instruction to ensure that evidenced-based, high impact teaching practices are incorporated into all lessons
- teachers at Sunshine SDS 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/guardians 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
- monitor student attendance and implement attendance improvement strategies at a whole-school, cohort and individual level
- we engage in school wide positive behaviour support with our staff and students, which includes programs such as:
  o Respectful Relationships
  o Safe Schools
  o Team Teach
- opportunities for student inclusion (i.e. sports teams, clubs, recess and lunchtime activities)

Individual:

Sunshine SDS implements a range of strategies that support and promote targeted 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/guardian to talk about how best to help the student engage with school (Team around the Learner)
- developing individual learning plans such as Engagement profiles, Individual Student Profiles, Behaviour Support or Response Plans

- 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 Child First
  - Re-engagement programs

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 Plan in collaboration with the student and their family
- running regular Student Support Group meetings for all students:
  - in Out of Home Care
  - and with other complex needs that require ongoing support and monitoring.

4. Identifying students in need of support

Sunshine SDS is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. The Student Engagement team plays a significant role in developing and implementing strategies which help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. For example, 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/guardians 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.

6. Student behavioural expectations

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

When a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our school community, Sunshine SDS will institute a staged response, consistent with the Department's Student Engagement and Inclusion Guidelines. Where appropriate, parents/guardians will be informed about the inappropriate behaviour and the action taken by teachers and other school staff.

Identified behaviour support strategies 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. All strategies 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:

- teacher controlled consequences such as moving a student in a classroom or other reasonable and proportionate responses to misbehaviour
- withdrawal of privileges
- behaviour reviews
- suspension
- expulsion

Suspension and expulsion are measures of last resort and may only be used in particular situations consistent with Department policy, available at: http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/participation/pages/engagement.aspx

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

7. Engaging with families

Sunshine SDS values the input of parents/guardians, 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/guardians 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 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

Sunshine 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:

- incidents data
- school reports
- parent survey
- case management
- CASES21
- SOCS

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Statement of Vision, Values and Expectation Policy,
Bullying and Harassment Policy Prevention,
Child Safe Standards

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy will be evaluated as part of a 2-year cycle of policy review
This policy was approved by School Council on 18th June 2019, last updated on 26th May 2019 and is scheduled for review in May 2021

Version: Final

Review Date: May 2021

'Sunshine SDS is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices heard about decisions that affect their lives'.