Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy

HELP FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Gisborne Secondary College on 03 5428 3691 or gisborne.sc@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.

Gisborne Secondary College 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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2. School values, philosophy and vision
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POLICY

1. School profile

Established in 1981, Gisborne Secondary College provides a safe and stimulating learning environment for up to 1300 students in the Macedon Ranges. We have an established reputation as an outstanding college in the quality of our wellbeing programs and the range of subjects and pathways available for our students. The strength of our current enrolments means that our learning programs will continue to expand over the next five years.

Year 7 and 8, our students work in purpose-built Learning centres with a core curriculum that includes English, mathematics, languages, humanities, and visual arts. Our Learning Centres provide exemplary transition support, and students working in the learning centres have the opportunity to develop 2 strong and enduring relationships with their teachers and with each other. Our parents speak at length about how connected their children feel in these learning centres, and how effective the family-college communication is.

Our Year 9 curriculum is unique in offering the 'RAID Program' (an acronym for our values of Respect, Achievement, Innovation and Diversity) which engages students one day per fortnight in a range of positive, diverse, and stimulating activities aimed at their specific social and cognitive developmental level.

As students' progress into Years 10, 11 and 12, our College offers a comprehensive range of learning experiences to meet individual needs and pathways. There are over 50 different VCE and VCE-VM courses on offer as well as VET programs. Many of our Year 10 students select VCE or Vocational Education Training (VET) subjects to begin their qualifications journey.

2. School values, philosophy and vision

Gisborne Secondary College's values are Respect, Achievement, Innovation and Diversity

- We respect ourselves, our school and each another and understand that our attitudes and behaviours have an impact on the people around us
- We strive for achievement excellence, which means having high expectations of ourselves and others, and showing determination and persistence
- We are creative and innovative, always looking for new ideas and approaches
- We value honesty, integrity, diversity, and individual differences; we affirm the right of every child to achieve full potential through the development of self-confidence, self-esteem and a sense of pride and direction

Gisborne Secondary College's vision is:

- To provide the widest possible positive, personal, and academic experience for all students
- To value each student as an individual
- To encourage students to develop interests both inside and outside the classroom
- To provide students with a safe, secure, and supportive environment

Our full Vision and Values statement as well as the College Mission is available online at:
https://gisbornesc.vic.edu.au/vision-values/

3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies

Gisborne Secondary College 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
- 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
- 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
- Delivering 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 Gisborne Secondary College use the LEARN 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
- Teachers at Gisborne Secondary College 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 support students moving into different stages of their schooling
- Acknowledging positive behaviour and student achievement in the classroom, and formally in school assemblies and communication to parents
- Monitoring 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 Representative Council and other forums including year group meetings and Peer Support Groups. Students are also encouraged to speak with their teachers, Year Level Coordinator, Assistant Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns
- Creating opportunities for cross-age connections amongst students through school plays, athletics, music programs and peer support programs
- All students are encouraged to self-refer to the Student Wellbeing Coordinator, School Nurse, Year Level 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
    - Bully Stoppers
    - Safe Schools
- Programs, incursions and excursions developed to address issue specific needs or behaviour (i.e. anger management programs)
- Opportunities for student inclusion (i.e. sports teams, clubs, leadership opportunities, RAID, Connect programs, recess and lunchtime activities, buddy programs and peer support programs)
- 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.
- Processes to access student services are prompted and clear to all students

Targeted

- Each year group has a Year Level Leader/Coordinator, a senior teacher responsible for their year, who monitor the health and wellbeing of students in their year, 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 First Nations and Torres Strait Islander culture – refer to our Victorian Marrung Plan for further information
- 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 our First Nations programs within the college run by our Wellbeing Team and dedicated First Nations Support Officer appointed by the College to oversee, advocate and be present for matters involving First Nations and Torres Strait Islander students, including SSG meetings.

- We have developed the following strategies and actions to promote cultural safety and inclusion in our school community which includes but is not limited to:
  - First Nations Cooking and Garden Program
  - Regular support from the regional Koorie Educational Support Officer (KESO)
  - Regular support from the regional Bendigo and District Aboriginal Cooperative (BDAC)
  - Begin events and meetings with a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of Country as a standing agenda item
  - Fly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags on school grounds
  - Designated First Nations Gardens and spaces within the college
  - Cultural overlay incorporated and embedded into the school landscape
  - First Nations voice is part of decision making in matters that affect First Nation students.
  - Be open to different ways of doing and expressing things, build schoolwide knowledge of First Nations histories, cultures, perspectives, values, skills and attitudes.
  - First Nations perspectives built into the curriculum at all levels.
  - Celebration and recognition of key dates, events and anniversaries across the year including but not limited to - Close the Gap Day: 18 March, Harmony Day: 21 March, Reconciliation Week: 27 May to 3 June, NAIDOC week: First week of July, International Day of Indigenous People: 9 August.
- We support learning and wellbeing outcomes of students from refugee background through the Wellbeing Team, Inclusion Team, identified opportunities for student inclusion and community supports
- 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*. We also provide students and staff an opportunity to engage with the Gisborne Secondary College Pride Crew and celebration days in line with the College's value of Diversity
- 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
- Gisborne Secondary College assists students to plan their Year 10 work experience, supported by their Career Action Plan

Individual

Gisborne Secondary College 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

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 Engagement 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.

4. Identifying students in need of support

Gisborne Secondary College 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. Gisborne Secondary College 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 (e.g. NAPLAN, PAT, Victorian Curriculum Levels, Progress and Semester Reports and SAC outcomes)
- 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
- wellbeing presentation statistics and Inclusion Team data

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.

6. Student behavioural expectations and management

Behavioural expectations of students are grounded in our school's Statement of Values/Student behaviour matrix.

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, Gisborne Secondary College 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.

The Principal of Gisborne Secondary College 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

Gisborne Secondary College 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, 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

Gisborne Secondary College 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

Gisborne Secondary College 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

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 policies are relevant to this Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy:

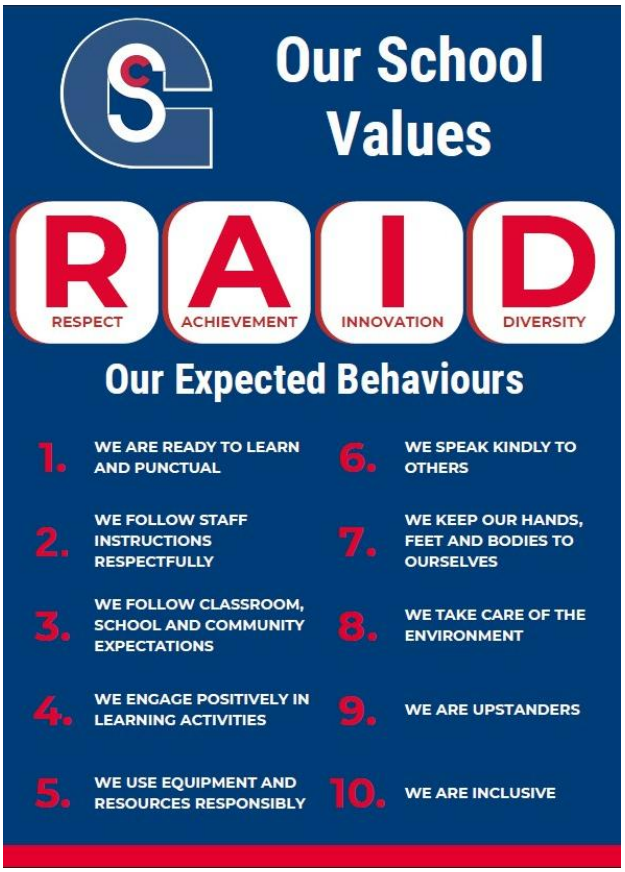
- Attendance
- Student Engagement
- Child Safe Standards
- Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care
- Students with Disability
- LGBTIQA+ Student Support
- Behaviour – Students
- Suspensions
- Expulsions
- Restraint and Seclusion

The following school policies are also relevant to this Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy:

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Statement of Values and School Philosophy

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	September 2026
Consultation	School Council, 9th September 2026
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	Before September 2028

NOTE: The following College documents and established school processes should be referenced alongside this policy to support its consistent implementation and a shared understanding of expectations for students, staff, parents/carers and community members:

College Values, Expected Behaviours, Responses to Unwanted Behaviours, and Ready to Learn Expectations.