

## Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy

*Berengarra takes a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and is fully committed to ensuring that its strategies, policies, procedures and practices meet all Child Safety Standards as specified in Ministerial Order No. 870 (2015)*

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all students and members of the Berengarra 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.

Berengarra 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 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 excursions and camps.

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#### **1. School profile**

Berengarra School was established in 1976 by Ken Jago and Bruce Wicking, educators who recognised that not all young people are capable of success in a mainstream school environment.

Berengarra School has campuses in Box Hill and the Pathways Campus in Chadstone. Box Hill Campus caters for students aged 12 to 16 and has capacity for 50 students.

The Pathways Campus caters for students aged 16 to 19 who are considering vocational training, and therefore has a TAFE and work component. The Pathways Campus has

capacity for 32 students. The campus operates a café, enabling students to complete the work education component of their VCAL studies.

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

*Berengarra School: 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 hope, belonging, nurturing and success at every opportunity.

Our school's vision is to be recognised as a leading independent, specialist school for students experiencing significant social and emotional challenges. We will provide an innovative and effective curriculum in a wellbeing-centred environment which enables students to re-connect with learning and engage successfully in further education and future employment.

*See: Berengarra School: Statement of Values and School Philosophy*

## **3. Engagement strategies**

Berengarra School has developed a range of strategies to promote engagement, positive behaviour and respectful relationships for all students in our school. We acknowledge that our students 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 school-wide, targeted and selective engagement strategies used by our school is included below:

School-wide, all students are supported through:

- A Child Safe school environment as a first priority
- Diversity accepted and celebrated
- Every student well-known by the whole school community
- Staff selected for their capacity to work with students with diverse needs
- A dedicated wellbeing team to support the implementation of wellbeing practices across the school
- A member of school leadership whose focus is wellbeing ensuring a commitment to wellbeing from the top-down.
- Focus on relationships as critical to successful engagement and student wellbeing and this being reflected in the way the school day is structured and curriculum is delivered
- Wellbeing-focused curriculum content relevant and adjusted to student cohort
- Homegroup structures designed to support student wellbeing and engagement
- Wellbeing-focused behaviour management practices
- Assisting students to develop understanding, insight and skill at managing own needs within the school environment through the development and daily use of student Focus Plans
- Holding a view that all behaviour is communication and provides opportunities for learning and growth
- Well established policies, procedures and practices around bullying and harassment that are implemented consistently to support a positive school culture
- Ready access to support and informal counselling when required

Targeted students are supported through:

- Programs and processes to address high prevalence issues within student cohort
- Support provided to families/carers around issues impacting school engagement
- Coordination and liaison with external professionals and services working with students
- Targeted Support Meetings are run when particular issues of concern arise aimed to deliver higher levels of support and structure in addressing
- Use of student “Agreements” when concerning behaviours present challenges to the safety and wellbeing of the school community

Selected students are supported through:

- Formal student counselling delivered by a qualified, full-time counsellor located at each campus.
- Case work for students at risk or where there are complex needs
- Development of safety plans where there are issues around risk
- Intensive support around school attendance/school refusal issues

#### **4. Diversity and Inclusion**

At Berengarra School, we strive to uphold the principles of inclusive education, meaning that all members of our community are valued and supported to fully belong participate, learn, develop and succeed within an inclusive and nurturing school culture.

Students who attend Berengarra School present with widely diverse needs. Berengarra School celebrates diversity and is committed to supporting the inclusion and success of all students. This requires an acknowledgement that some students have intersecting identities or additional needs that need to be taken into consideration. These identities may relate to:

- having a disability or additional learning needs
- gender identity
- sexual orientation
- being an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person
- race
- cultural identity
- speaking a language other than English
- social factors
- economic factors
- experience of abuse, neglect or family violence

#### **5. Identifying students in need of support**

Berengarra School is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. Berengarra School utilises the following information and tools to identify students in need of extra emotional, social or educational support:

- Thorough processes and practices at enrolment to identify needs of students and school’s capacity and strategy to support these needs
- A pre-commencement meeting with the Head of Campus and the School Counsellor to complete an initial Focus Plan and put resources and plans in place to support student needs

- Twice daily homegroups for students to connect with their homegroup teachers who can identify issues and where additional support is required
- Homegroup teachers in regular contact with parents/carers regularly to discuss student needs
- Structures and supports outside the classroom available when students require additional support (e.g. leadership support, cool-off, step-out, ready access to informal counselling)
- Twice daily staff briefings for staff to discuss students who may require additional support
- Twice yearly Education Support Group meetings to discuss supports to students
- Individual Education Plans for all students which are regularly reviewed

## **6. 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:

- work towards full participation in their educational program
- work towards 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 homegroup teacher/s or any member of school staff or leadership. If preferred, students are encouraged to speak to their parent/s or carers about any concerns who can then bring these to the homegroup teacher/s or a member of the leadership team.

## **7. Student behavioural expectations**

Behavioural expectations of students, staff and families are grounded in our school's statement of values. Behaviour that is bullying or harassing will be responded to consistently with Berengarra School's policy.

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:

- students receive a reminder that their behaviour is inappropriate or disruptive to the learning of others
- students will be asked to leave the classroom if their behaviour continues to be inappropriate or disruptive to the learning of others
- if a student's behaviour has affected the safety of others within the community or continually disrupts the learning of others, they may be sent home at the discretion of the Head of Campus.
- Students may be supported to repair harm done to others and learn about the consequences of their behaviour through the use of restorative practices.
- Students may be required to have 'time off program' or be suspended
- Students may be placed on "Agreements" to measure the behaviour and whether improvements are being realised.
- In serious instances, students may be permanently excluded from attending the program in line with the School's *Permanent Exclusion from School Policy*.

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

## **8. Engaging with families**

Berengarra 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
- ensuring that all members of the school community are aware of and adhere to our Community Code of Conduct
- ensuring parents and carers can easily access to Homegroup teachers and school leadership to raise concerns
- ensuring regular communication with families around student progress is in place for all students
- involving families in decision making
- coordinating resources and services from the community for families
- including families in Education Support Groups and developing individual plans for students.
- inclusion and involvement of parents and carers in special events
- a welcoming, friendly and approachable atmosphere where families and carers feel comfortable to engage with school staff and their student's learning

## **9. Evaluation**

Berengarra 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
- parent survey
- disciplinary measures utilised

- school reports
- student attendance
- outcomes of Targeted Support Meetings
- Individual Education Plan reviews

**See Berengarra School Policies and Procedures including:**

*Statement of Values and School Philosophy; Bullying Prevention; Student Behaviour Management and Discipline; Community Code of Conduct; Permanent Exclusion from School Policy*

***(Previously Student Welfare and Transition Policy - Endorsed by Board: July 2018, Aug 2018)***

***Updated June 2020 to meet expanded VRQA requirements.***

***Endorsed by Board: Date 11 June 2020***

***Review date: June 2022***