



STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact The Alpine School on 03 5150 8100 or alpine.school@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.

The Alpine 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.

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POLICY

1. School profile

Opened in April 2000 as an innovative specialist setting for leadership education, The Alpine School is unique within the Department of Education. At our four campuses across Victoria, the school provides an intensive, high-quality leadership and enterprise program for small teams of Year 9 students selected from Victorian government schools.

Each year, government schools are eligible to nominate groups of up to six students for the program. Students are selected at their home school level on the basis of their leadership potential, their understanding of the program and



a commitment to contribute to their home community with a Community Learning Project (CLP), upon their return after the experience.

Schools are allocated to a campus based on their Department of Education region and their setting (metropolitan or regional).

Year 9 has long been regarded as a challenging developmental period with measurably diminished student engagement. The Alpine School provides opportunities that may otherwise be unavailable to state school students in Victoria. The program is particularly focused on personal development, leadership education, student agency, and project-based learning. Outdoor and adventure activities, expeditions, risk-based and team-based activities are a central element of the program.

Students are provided a developmentally-appropriate level of autonomy, and as such the program relies on a high degree of student self-motivation and regulation. The School strives to provide a nurturing and challenging environment that empowers students to reach their personal best, both as young leaders and as socially aware, action-focused individuals.

During their stay at The Alpine School, students share a room with another student, manage their own washing and clothes, have a roster of duties, cleaning and maintenance of the school, and look after their own possessions. Students have input into the planning of menus and assist kitchen staff in preparation. Phones and other personal electronic devices are not allowed at The Alpine School. The school provides each student with a laptop for classroom learning and reflection.

Our four campuses across Victoria each provide unique and varied opportunities to students.

The Alpine School/Dinner Plain Campus was the first campus of our school, opening in 2000. Situated at 1600 metres above sea level, near Dinner Plain Village in the Victorian Alps, the location of the Dinner Plain Campus allows a tremendous opportunity for exploring and interacting with many iconic locations in the Victorian Alps, including the Victoria River, Mount Loch, various huts in the High Country, Swindler's Spur and Mount Hotham. Seasonal features of the outdoor program include cross-country and downhill skiing, mountain bike riding along the Dinner Plain trails, caving at Mount Buffalo and White-Water Rafting on the Mitta Mitta River.

Following the success of the program, the Snowy River Campus was opened in 2007 at the mouth of the Snowy River near Marlo, on the site of the Marlo Aerodrome. The surrounding environment caters for a range of unique outdoor activities to take place, including- surfing at Cape Conran, canoeing in the Snowy River Estuary System, caving at Buchan Caves, mountain biking in the Marlo Plains and hiking throughout the Cape Conran Coastal Park. The rich indigenous history of the local area is a key learning focus, as is our regular interaction with local community groups and schools.

The Gnurad-Gundidj (Noo-rad Goon-didge) Campus was opened in 2009 on the site of the former Glenormiston Agricultural College. The name was chosen in consultation with the local Aboriginal community and represents the traditional name of the area. Adjacent to Mount Noorat, near Camperdown, the Gnurad-Gundidj Campus is our most unique campus, situated among the volcanic plains, calderas, rivers and lakes of the Western District. The nearby marine environments of the Shipwreck Coast are rugged, scenic and historically significant.

Our newest campus, Don Valley, was opened in 2021. The school is situated in the small community of Don Valley, next door to Don Valley Primary School, in the greater Yarra Valley region. The surrounding Yarra Ranges National Park provides a unique environment perfect for exploring the Yarra River, hiking and mountain biking in the surrounding Dandenong and Cathedral Ranges, or riding the Lilydale–Warburton rail trail. We share a close relationship with Don Valley Primary School, working with them and other local primary schools on the Local Learning Project.



2. School values, philosophy and vision

The Alpine School's 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 connectedness, respect, and self-belief at every opportunity.

Our school's vision is to create a community where people are passionate, informed and active global citizens.

Our Statement of Values is available online at: [insert link].

3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies

The Alpine 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 during the nine-week student leadership program, and that the needs of students will be closely monitored and address during this period.

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

Universal

- At initial visits and presentations to home schools made by The Alpine School staff, a clear and consistent message is conveyed to all staff, students, and parents/carers of the high expectations and standards of the program
- The fundamentals of the program are to prioritise positive relationships between staff and students, recognising the important role this plays in building and sustaining student wellbeing, and creating a culture that is inclusive, engaging and supportive. This begins on the first day when an arrival day meeting takes place between the staff, parents/carers and students – an opportunity for all parties to meet one on one, commence those relationships and clarify any questions that may present themselves
- The school uses an online portal, uEducateUs, allowing direct communication between the schools, parents/carers, and students. As the students are unable to have direct, in-person contact with their families during their nine-week stay, the uEducateUs portal enables the school and staff to be proactive and responsive in their communication with parents/carers, who we recognise as vital partners in this journey.
- The uEducateUs portal is also used to collect student feedback.
- The Alpine School delivers a specific Year Nine experiential curriculum to ensure that students can fully engage in the learning and programs that are tailored to their interests, strengths and aspirations.
- Teachers at The Alpine School use an experiential 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
- The Alpine School staff adopt a broad range of teaching and assessment practices 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 is incorporated into our curriculum and promoted to students, staff and parents so that it is shared and celebrated as the foundation of our school community
- We monitor student engagement and implement improvement strategies at whole-school, campus, home-school, expedition team, and individual levels.



School for Student Leadership

- We acknowledge positive behaviour and student achievement during group activities, via our D.E.A.R. (Drop Everything and Reflect) sessions, in school morning meetings, and in communications to families via the uEducateUs portal
- Students are allocated to expedition teams, a group of approximately 12 students from both metro and regional schools. These groups participate in activities that promote and encourage leadership skills, teamwork and resilience.
- Students are given regular opportunities throughout the 9-week program to contribute to and provide feedback on decisions about campus activities and operations, both formally (via the uEducateUs portal) and informally.
- Students are encouraged to speak with their teachers, education support staff, Assistant Principal and Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns.
- All students are welcome to self-refer to their home teacher, education support staff, Assistant Principal and Principal if they would like to discuss an 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 create opportunities for cross-age connections through interactions with local primary schools in the Local Learning Project program.
- We engage in school wide positive behaviour support with our staff and students, which includes programs such as Respectful Relationships and Safe Schools
- Room buddies and a peer feedback support program

Targeted

- Each student has access to onsite educational support staff, who will monitor the health and wellbeing of students throughout the 9-week program and act as a point of contact for students who may need additional support.
- All Koorie students are connected with the partnership program with the Koorie Academy of Excellence
- all cultural and linguistically diverse students are supported to feel safe and included in our school including through acknowledgment of harmony day.
- we support learning and wellbeing outcomes of students from refugee background
- we provide a positive and respectful learning environment for our students who identify as LGBTIQ+ and follow the Department's 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
- The Alpine School assists students to plan their Year 10 Work Experience, supported by their Career Action Plan
- Staff will apply a trauma-informed approach to working with students who have experienced trauma and seek assistance from parents/carers if required via the uEducateUs portal.

Individual

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



- The induction interview between the home school liaison teacher, parents/carers and the student before commencing the program is captured and recorded in the uEducateUs portal, enabling the school to ensure that the emotional, behavioural, physical and medical needs of every student are supported. Providing a safe, secure and comfortable environment for every student is of paramount importance.
- The arrival day interview between staff, parents/carers and the student establishes important supportive relationships, allows key introductions to be made, and provides the opportunity to reiterate the induction interview and identify anything that may have been missed or overlooked.
- Each student completes an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) in the first week of the program, establishing goals they would like to achieve during the program using the SMART framework (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound). This is reviewed in conjunction with the student's home school liaison teacher(s) throughout the term.
- We identify specific individual needs throughout the program and provide support and advice to the home school and parents/carers as the student transitions to home after their extended stay at The Alpine School.
- 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

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

- Using the uEducateUs portal and the support services onsite, the School will endeavour to be responsive and sensitive to changes in the student's circumstances and health and wellbeing while with us at the extended residential program
- 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 engagement, eating and exercise and developing Improvement Plans in collaboration with the student and their family
- engaging with our regional Koorie Engagement Support Officers

4. Identifying students in need of support

The Alpine School is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. The engagement strategies outlined above clearly explain how the school endeavours to do this. The Alpine School liaison teacher plays a significant role in developing and implementing strategies help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. The Alpine 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
- uEducateUs records
- academic performance
- observations by school staff such as changes in engagement, behaviour, self-care, eating patterns, sleep patterns, activities of daily living, social connectedness and motivation
- engagement and communication with families at home
- self-referrals or referrals from peers

Due to the nature of The Alpine School, being a program where students are staying for an extended period of time in an unfamiliar setting, with students and staff they do not necessarily know, there are additional strategies put in place for the overnight period when students may feel more vulnerable or require additional support:



- staff are rostered on for overnight duty in each dormitory wing
- students are in close enough proximity to the staff member on duty should they require support in the night.
- students are made aware of the role and responsibilities of overnight staff at the beginning of the program and that they should feel comfortable and able to ask for help should the need arise.
- external doors in each dormitory wing are alarmed but not locked, alerting overnight staff in case of an emergency. This is further outlined in our [[Child Safety Policy]].

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

Behavioural expectations of students 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 Policy.

When a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our school community, The Alpine 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 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 campus principal or principal
- restorative practices
- internal detentions or suspensions
- behaviour reviews and contracts
- suspension and referral to home school
- expulsion from the 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 The Alpine 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

The Alpine 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:

- engaging with families prior to the program by visiting home schools and developing trusting relationships
- conducting an induction interview with the home school, parents/carers and the student
- conducting an arrival interview with the parents/carers and the student
- 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.
- Contacting parents at weeks 1, 5 and 8 of the program to ensure that the flow of communication is regular and reciprocal
- involving families with student reflections and other curriculum-related activities using the uEducateUs portal
- coordinating resources and services from the community for families at the completion of the program

8. Evaluation

The Alpine 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
- uEducateUs data
- SOCS data

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school’s website and on the uEducateUs portal
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in school information 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](#)
- [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
- Statement of Values and School Philosophy
- Action Plan – Aboriginal Learning, Wellbeing and Safety

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	July 2024
Consultation	
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	July 2026