

STUDENT WELLBEING & ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Reviewed by School Council in Nov 2023
Approved by the Principal in Nov 2023



Help for non-English speakers
If you need help to understand this policy, please contact the General Office.

PURPOSE

Thornbury High 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 camps and excursions.

CONTENTS

1. School profile
2. ChildSafe Standards
3. School values, philosophy and vision
4. Wellbeing and Engagement strategies
5. Identifying students in need of support
6. Student rights and responsibilities
7. Student behavioural expectations
8. Engaging with families
9. Evaluation

POLICY

1. School profile

Established in 1962 with only 162 students, Thornbury High School has been through many changes as it grew into the school it is today. Amalgamations of schools in the area in the late 1990s resulted in a variety of different school names, uniforms and student backgrounds at the school. In the middle of 2004 the 'College' (as the school was then termed) felt that it was an appropriate time to simplify its name to better reflect other changes such as the new uniform, the new curriculum and reunited campus. The 'High School' reflects the traditional academic origins of secondary education in the State and the 'Thornbury' name is an accurate reflection of both its location and a reminder of its tradition.

In 2023, the school's enrollment is approximately 1100 students. The school's curriculum is founded on the key underpinnings of achievement, engagement and connection.

The school has four Principal class, 70 equivalent full time teachers and 20 Educational Support Staff working together to achieve the school's vision, the central tenets of which are:

- high academic expectations and standards
- a safe and secure learning environment
- a wide-range of opportunities for students to pursue individual and collective aspirations

2. ChildSafe Standards

Thornbury High School is a child safe environment in accordance with the Victorian Government Child Safe Standards. Thornbury High School activity promotes the safety and wellbeing of all students and all school staff are committed to protecting students from abuse or harm in the school environment, in accordance with our legal obligations outlined in the Child Safe Standards. Thornbury High School has a Child Safe Policy consistent with the department of education, please see our website for details.

3. School values, philosophy and vision

At Thornbury High School, we are proud of what we do every day to champion innovation, inclusiveness and academic excellence. Through our extensive academic and extra-curricular programs we aim to foster and inspire a new generation of respectful and resilient young people ready to face a rapidly-changing world.

Our vision centres around fundamental knowledge, skills and experiences:

- Literacy and numeracy capabilities for lifelong learning
- Rich science, technology and arts experiences
- Leadership through humanities, languages and physical education
- Success in a digital world
- Enterprise skills to problem solve, think critically and creatively, communicate and collaborate
- Our place in a global community

'Achievement and Excellence'. Our motto, visible in all our actions, represents what is critical to the education of the whole person. We value the fundamental attributes of a vibrant, quality education:

- Effort and achievement in all aspects of school life
- Active engagement in learning
- Connectedness, resilience and wellbeing
- Celebration of diversity

4. Wellbeing and Engagement strategies

Thornbury High School has developed a whole school approach to promote wellbeing and engagement for all students across the year levels. The needs of students vary at times and also change as the students develop and move through the schooling. A summary of the strategies developed aim to assist students socially, emotionally and educationally is included below:

Thornbury High 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 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:

Whole school approach to student wellbeing and engagement

- Thornbury High School values highlight safety and inclusion as core values and expectations of students, staff and parents to adhere to these values is incorporated into our curriculum and daily processes.
- Communication channels have been developed and are used to highlight the importance of the schools core values and celebrate positive behaviours by all members of the school community. These include the school website, newsletter, Compass Newsfeed, Compass Chronicle and award ceremonies.
- Thornbury High School is recognised as a DET Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships School. The school has an action plan in place to continually develop its inclusive approach to all members of its community.

- Attendance procedures and strategies to effectively monitor, communicate and improve student absences and lateness to school.
- Analysis of, and response to, student data in a variety of areas including attendance, attitudes to school surveys, bullying survey, assessments, chronicle posts, detentions, suspensions.
- Delivery of a broad curriculum and pathway options for students including VCE, VET and electives programs to ensure students choose subjects that are tailored to their interests, strengths and aspirations.
- Large range of extra-curricular opportunities available to students throughout the school years including:
 - Sport: approximately five representative sporting opportunities available to every student per term, plus our Year 7-10 boys and girls soccer academy and girls football academy.
 - Performing Arts: school production, VCE theatre production, drama, theatre club
 - Music: instrumental music for all year 7+8 students, multiple bands
- Student opportunities to provide feedback on school decisions and specifically on Respectful Relationships and Child Safety. Examples: school captains, year level captains, student representative council, peer support leaders, annual bullying survey, annual attitudes to school survey.
- Year level teams are a large investment by the school, with Leading Teachers (Head of Year) and two coordinators to monitor and develop the pastoral care of students.
- Access to the student wellbeing coordinator, school mental health practitioners, school nurse and visiting counsellors for all students via self, family or staff referral processes.
- 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.

Targeted strategies to promote positive behaviour

- Transitional program for all year 7 students to ensure an effective move to high school, including:
 - Primary school visits prior to starting high school by the year 7 team.
 - Large data collection on all students in order to develop academic, social and emotional support for all students.
 - Orientation program aimed at familiarising students with school processes and expectations.
 - Peer support program allows a specific group of trained year 10 students to support year 7 students.
- Processes are in place to celebrate positive behaviours by students in a number of ways including reports, CATs, Compass chronicle posts, house points, year level assemblies and awards ceremonies.
- Year 7-10 students undertake a health education program each week with a focus on teaching specific personal, social and emotional wellbeing skills.
- Year 11-12 students undertake a personal wellbeing program each fortnight designed to further develop personal, social and emotional wellbeing skills.
- Year 10 students undertake work experience, supported by their Health teacher and the careers team.
- Year 9 students undertake the Morrisby Careers test to determine personal interests, strengths and possible career pathways.
- Connection with indigenous students via the Koorie education support officer (KESO) to assist indigenous students at various stages of their schooling, through the Waalitj Foundation's Deadly Sistas Group (DSG) and the Deadly Choices Program.
- Year 8 Mentoring Program targets specific students to assist with their personal development and provide targeted role models for these students.
- Staff Respectful Relationships Committee developed to provide ongoing assessment of the school vision, policies and procedures and ensure an inclusive and appropriate approach.
- Year 10-12 students are assisted to develop a Managed Individual Pathways (MIPs) plan, with targeted goals based on specific data to assist them in creating effective career goals.
- Indigenous 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 RAP.

- Students for whom English is an additional language are supported through our EAL program and all culturally and linguistically diverse students are supported to feel safe and included in our school.
- We support the learning and wellbeing outcomes of students from refugee backgrounds through the work of our year level teams as well as our African school community liaison officer (SCLO).
- We provide a positive and respectful learning environment for our students who identify as LGBTIQ+ and follow the Department's policy on [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 .
- 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 11 and above will be assisted to develop a Career Action Plan, with targeted goals and support to plan for their future
- Thornbury High School assists students to plan their Year 10 work experience, which later contributed to their Career Action Plan

Individual strategies to promote positive behaviour

- Effective data collection through transition and enrolment processes to identify students at risk and in possible need of support at an early stage.
- Monitoring and responding to individual student data such as attendance, Attitudes to school survey, Bullying survey.
- Fostering a culture of support and sensitivity to changes in a student's circumstances or wellbeing.
- Referral of students of concern to year level team, student wellbeing team.
- Student participation in mediations and restorative practices following incidents where relationships have broken down.
- Individual Compass Chronicle documentation of incidents, concerns and referrals to allow tracking of student wellbeing over time.
- Access to DET programs and services such as:
 - [Program for Students with Disabilities](#)
 - [Mental health toolkit](#)
 - [headspace](#)

Bullying & Harassment

Thornbury High School has zero tolerance of bullying and of harassment in any form.

The wellbeing of every child at the school is our highest priority. We acknowledge our legal and moral obligations to contact authorities when we are worried about a child's safety. We are committed to preventing child abuse and identifying risks early, and removing and reducing these risks. We have robust human resources and recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers. We are committed to regularly training and educating our staff and volunteers on child abuse risks. We have specific policies, procedures and training in place that support our leadership team, staff and volunteers to achieve these commitments. We recognise that developing a child safe environment is an ongoing process and will not be achieved in the short term. Implementing the Child Safe Standards requires an ongoing commitment. It will not be achieved in one activity or exercise.

We:

- take a whole-school approach focusing on safety and wellbeing
- consistently and fairly respond to all incidents of bullying that have been reported to the school and ensure that planned interventions are used to respond to these incidents
- ensure that support is provided to any student who has been affected by, engaged in or witnessed bullying behaviour

- provide regular updates, within the bounds of privacy legislation, to parents or caregivers about the management of incidents
- address cyber bullying as part of our Internet / Social Media Policy

The school encourages all children to speak up when bullying or harassment is encountered.

Advice to students:

- If you see another person being bullied or harassed, tell the person that you saw the incident and advise them to report it to an appropriate person. If your friend is harassing another person, let them know that their behaviour is unacceptable.
- Bystanders who do nothing to stop bullying may be contributing to the problem by providing an audience for the bully.
- Your concerns will be taken seriously. All complaints will be treated confidentially.

5. Identifying students in need of support

Thornbury High School is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. Our year level teams play a significant role in developing and implementing strategies to help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. Thornbury High 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

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, 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.

7. Behavioural Expectations and Management

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

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, Thornbury High School will fairly and consistently 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 alongside disciplinary measures such as detention, withdrawal of privileges or withdrawal from class.

Restorative processes involve conversations in a safe space between students and staff to discuss inappropriate behaviour, acknowledging its impact on those involved and develop an understanding of more appropriate ways to interact within the school context. Support is provided to restore relationships that have been negatively impacted so that those involved can work and learn together.

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 (with consideration to individual circumstances). 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
- 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 and Training. The Principal of Thornbury High 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.

Further information and details are outlined in the Student Planner.

8. Engaging with Parents and Carers

Thornbury High 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, 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
- coordinating resources and services from the community for families
- including families in Student Support Groups, and developing individual plans for students.

9. Evaluation

Thornbury High 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:

- attitudes to school survey data
- bullying survey data
- incidents data (Compass)
- wellbeing referral data (Compass)
- school reports
- parent survey
- CASES21
- SOCS

Thornbury High School 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
- Provided to staff at induction and included in staff handbook/manual
- Made available in hard copy from Reception 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

- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Statement of Values and School Philosophy

REVIEW CYCLE

Policy updated:	Aug 23
Consultation	School Council Nov 2023
Approved by:	Principal Nov 2023
Review date:	Nov 2025