# Student Wellbeing Policy

| | |
|---|---|
| Date Approved: | 17 September 2024 |
| Approved by: | SCC Board |

**PURPOSE**

Shepparton Christian College recognises that the wellbeing of children and young people is enhanced, and their learning outcomes are optimised when they feel safe, secure and connected to others. This policy is intended to provide students, staff and other members of our school community with an understanding of our commitment to providing a safe and supportive learning environment framed within a biblical worldview. In recognition of the wide range of factors impacting student wellbeing, the College utilises a whole-school approach to support students to achieve their full potential.

**SCOPE**

Student wellbeing is a shared responsibility between school, home, church and the wider community. It incorporates the following:

1. Physical and emotional safety
2. Pro-social values
   The key pro-social values are: Compassion; Cooperation; Acceptance of differences; Respect; Friendliness; Honesty; Fairness; and Responsibility.
3. A supportive and caring school community
4. Social and emotional learning
5. A strengths-based approach
6. A sense of meaning and purpose
7. A healthy lifestyle
   https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/appendix_1_literature_review.pdf

We seek to have a staff who are confident, skilled and proactive in supporting the wellbeing of all our students. This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions.

**DEFINITION**

Wellbeing refers to a sustainable state of positive mood and attitude, resilience and satisfaction with self, relationships and experiences at school.
http://wellbeingaustralia.com.au/wba/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/student_wellbeing_litreview_v6.pdf

**POLICY FRAMEWORK**

Five interrelated principles and practices underpin the College's approach to student wellbeing:

- Leadership. The Principal and school leaders play an active role in building a positive learning environment where the whole school community feels included, connected, safe and respected.

- Inclusion. All members of the school community are active participants in building a welcoming school culture that values diversity, and fosters positive, respectful relationships.
- Student voice. Students are active participants in their own learning and wellbeing, feel connected and use their social and emotional skills to be respectful, resilient and safe.
- Partnerships. Families and communities collaborate as partners with the school to support student learning, safety and wellbeing.
- Support. School staff, students and families share and cultivate an understanding of wellbeing and support for positive behaviour and how this supports effective teaching and learning.

**WELLBEING APPROACHES AND STRATEGIES**

A whole-school approach to student wellbeing requires a shared understanding of the factors contributing to wellbeing. We recognise the importance of student friendships and peer support in helping 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.

Wellbeing concerns are addressed through a range of activities and support structures based on student's needs, ranging from homeroom teachers, classroom teachers and year level coordinators through to chaplaincy and counselling services. A whole-school approach draws on the considerable strengths inherent within the College community.

Wellbeing programs and strategies include, but are not limited to:

- Student Wellbeing Team (SWT) including Chaplain, Counsellor and Primary Mental Health and Wellbeing Leader
- Whole school Social Emotional Learning (SEL) program
- Transition programs
- Chapel services
- Cross age activities (e.g. senior students reading with lower primary students)
- Mentoring programs
- Sports teams
- Health promotion events such as the Push Up Challenge and other mental health awareness initiatives
- Incursions and excursions to address specific needs
- Parent seminars

Student wellbeing is the responsibility of all staff. Teachers and support staff have a vital role in the early assessment of risks and identification of student concerns and needs. They play a crucial role in prevention and early intervention initiatives designed to promote resilience and help-seeking and provide timely support when needed. The College utilises a range of information and tools to identify students in need of additional support including personal, health and learning information, attendance and academic performance records, learning behaviours, observations by school staff such as changes in behaviour, engagement, self-care and social connectedness, engagement with families and self-referrals or referrals from peers.

**STUDENT WELLBEING TEAM**

The Student Wellbeing Team (SWT) is both proactive and responsive to the wellbeing needs of the College community. They engage the school community in conversations about health and wellbeing designed to improve awareness of risk factors and protective factors. This includes providing mental health education, addressing stigma and the barriers to help-seeking, promoting positive wellbeing through special focus events (such as the Push Up Challenge) and improving access to wellbeing services.

In addition, they provide timely and relevant support to students experiencing wellbeing concerns. The team are skilled at counselling, pastoral care and case work including assessment, goal setting, intervention/support and referral to external professional supports. They promote a range of positive mental health strategies including providing youth-friendly mental health education, strengths-based strategies and evidence-based therapies. The SWT promotes student agency, advocates for students to access care in their best interests and encourage help-seeking behaviour, as well as actively collaborating with families.

The SWT also encourages active participation in the spiritual life of the College. Together with teachers they provide students with a range of opportunities to engage with their beliefs and grow in their personal relationship with God, including chapel services, pastoral care, Bible curriculum and extra-curricular activities such as the mission trip. They respectfully offer prayer support and discussion with students to encourage integration of faith with education and everyday life.

The College is committed to providing a child safe environment where students are safe and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their wellbeing. All staff have a duty of care to protect students from harm, and further are mandated by law to protect students from abuse and neglect if they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child needs protection (see Child Safety Responding and Reporting Policy). All staff are required on a regular basis to refresh their understanding of their responsibilities to protect children.

**WORKING WITH STUDENTS AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

Students can access the SWT through self-referral, staff referral or parent referral. There is also an open-door policy and students can drop in at any time. Students may choose to bring a support person with them to any session. This person may be another student, parent, teacher or occasionally someone from outside the school community.

<u>Disclosure of Personal Information</u>
It is the College's intention that wherever possible, the chaplain and counsellor will work in collaboration with families, however there are certain circumstances where this may not be permissible or beneficial to the student's wellbeing. Both chaplain and counsellor will maintain student confidentiality with students who are considered mature minors, clearly defining the boundaries of such to the student. They will not disclose confidential student information without first discussing the intended disclosure with, and then securing the permission from, the student (or parent as required for younger students).

In order to provide coordinated care and support for children and young people, there will be times when it may be necessary for the SWT to breach confidentiality such as:

• A student making a serious threat to harm himself or herself, or another person
• A student making a serious threat to cause significant damage to property
• A student breaking the law or making a serious threat to break the law
• A situation existing that could result in serious and imminent harm to the student or another person

In the situations outlined above, it is the duty of the Chaplain and Counsellor to disclose relevant information to the Principal for appropriate action to be undertaken.

In addition, it may be necessary to liaise with other professionals where informed consent has been either impractical or extremely difficult to obtain from the student. These professionals may include but are not limited to; psychologists, psychiatrists, counsellors, occupational therapists, social workers, doctors, speech pathologists. In these circumstances, information will only be exchanged with relevant professionals in order to facilitate coordinated and effective care and support and to discharge the College's Duty of Care.

**STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE CULTURAL SAFETY AND EQUITY FOR VULNERABLE STUDENTS**

As outlined in the Child Safety Policy, the College recognises the particular needs and vulnerabilities of certain groups in the community. Without neglecting the wellbeing needs of any student who requests support, or is identified by the College as a student of concern, particular attention is given to the wellbeing needs of students considered most vulnerable including Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+).

The College is committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected. We build school-wide knowledge of Aboriginal histories, cultures and perspectives. We provide staff with culturally safe practice training to build awareness of cultural competency practices.

The College is aware of the challenges, needs and strengths of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds including migrants and international students and seeks to engage with students and their families in ways that are respectful of diverse cultural perspectives. The College provides avenues for students to express their cultural identities and share their stories with the goal of creating an inclusive learning environment. The SWT ensure that student wellbeing is supported through culturally sensitive practices.

For students identifying as LGBTQI+ the College provides wellbeing support that is accessible, non-judgmental and sensitive to the needs of individual students. It commits to providing a safe learning environment and developing support plans in consultation with students, families and health professionals as needed.

## ENGAGING WITH FAMILIES

The College values the input of parents and carers, and we partner with families with the goal of seeing students engaged in meaningful learning experiences that will enrich their lives and help them to know God and understand their place in the world. We work hard to create successful partnerships with parents and carers by:

- ensuring that all parents have access to College policies and procedures
- maintaining open and respectful lines of communication between parents and staff
- providing parent engagement opportunities so that families can actively participate in their child's education (new family orientation events, subject selection, information nights, celebration events etc.)
- involving families with homework and other curriculum-related activities.
- coordinating resources and services from the community for families.

## RELATED COLLEGE POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

Child Safety Policy
Child Safety Code of Conduct
Child Safety Responding and Reporting Policy
Bullying and Harassment Policy
Discipline Policy
Privacy Policy
Staff Code of Conduct