

Berry Street School

Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy

1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all students and members of Berry Street School community understand:

- a) our commitment to providing a safe and inclusive learning community where our students have access to high quality education so they can thrive, achieve and belong
- b) our expectations for positive student behaviour and how the school, together with families/guardians/carers, supports students to achieve it
- c) how the school supports students to engage in learning and participation in the school community

The objective of this policy is to support our school to create and maintain a safe and inclusive learning community consistent with our school's vision and values.

2 Definitions

Term	Definition
Focus Plan	Developed between a teacher and a student to select strategies the student can proactively use when feeling escalated or dysregulated.
IEP	Individual Education Plan documenting student learning, wellbeing and/or attendance goals
BSEM	Berry Street Education Model is a whole-school trauma-informed strengths-based approach to teaching and learning developed by Berry Street Victoria.
LGBTQIA+	An acronym used to signify Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual people collectively

SSG	Student Support Group – a partnership between the School, parents/guardians/carers, the student and relevant agencies. The group works together to plan and support the educational, health, social, cultural and emotional wellbeing of students with diverse learning needs
Take Two	Berry Street’s Take Two program is a Victoria-wide therapeutic service helping to address the impact of trauma on children and young people after difficult or negative life events.
RAP	A Reconciliation Action Plan is a formal commitment to reconciliation. It documents how our School will strengthen relationships, respect and opportunities in the classroom, around the school and with the community

3 Scope

This policy applies to all students, staff, families, guardians and carers. The policy applies to both onsite and offsite school activities, including excursions and camps.

3.1 Review Cycle

The policy will be reviewed after any significant child safety incident or every two years in line with the Ministerial Order No.1359 and the minimum standards.

3.2 Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy hierarchy

This policy should also be read alongside the Berry Street School Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and other related policies and procedures.

Specific strategies related to supporting students’ de-escalation and regular attendance are further outlined in:

- **Supporting Student Behaviour Procedure** – how our school supports students experiencing various levels of dysregulation and escalation to regulate and deescalate, returning to recovery and repair.
- **Attendance Procedure** – how our school supports, monitors and maintains student attendance records, monitors and follows up student absences, and communicates with families/guardians/carers about student attendance.
- **Restrictive Interventions Procedure** – how our school ensures that application of any restrictive intervention within the school environment is safe.

4 Background and Context

4.1 School profile

The Berry Street School is a specialist, independent secondary school initially established in 2003. The School has four campuses located in:

- Ballarat, on Wadawurrung Country
- Morwell, on Gunaikurnai Country
- Narre Warren, on Bunurong Country
- Shepparton, on Yorta Yorta Country.

Our School operates to educate children with a history of adverse childhood experiences who are at risk of disengaging from their education. Our students may have significant gaps in academic achievement and present with complex behaviours within the school setting. The school adopts a trauma-informed strengths-based approach to teaching and learning by implementing the Berry Street Education Model (BSEM) and puts the needs of our students at the centre of everything we do.

The Berry Street School works alongside students from all backgrounds and experiences across its' four campuses. This includes:

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children
 - Approximately 1 in 5 of our students are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. At our School, we are committed to providing a culturally safe learning environment that teaches truth-telling. Our priority is to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices are heard, valued, respected and influential. In 2023, our School launched its' second Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), through Narragunnawali.
- Children with disability
 - Many of our students experience a social/emotional and/or sensory disability and the school makes extensive adjustments for their learning.
- Children who are a member of the LGBTQIA+ community
 - The Berry Street School provides a safe and inclusive learning community for students from the LGBTQIA+ community. Campuses run stand-out groups for students and allies.
- Children in out-of-home care
 - Approximately 1 in 5 students at our school are in out-of-home care.

4.2 School vision and values

The Berry Street School's vision is *to create and sustain a safe and inclusive learning community where our students have access to high-quality education so they can thrive, achieve and belong.*

Our staff are guided by Berry Street's values which are consistently applied and reinforced as part of the School's approach to teaching, learning and wellbeing:

- courage
- integrity
- respect
- accountability
- working together.

The Berry Street School has a zero tolerance of child abuse and supports the diversity of children's needs and upholds their best interests. The Berry Street School will listen to and empower our students.

4.3 Duty of Care

The Berry Street School is responsible for ensuring all staff are aware of their legal obligations including:

- the school owes all students a duty of care to take reasonable measures to protect them from reasonably foreseeable risks of injury
- the school owes a duty of care to take reasonable care that any student (or other persons) on the premises will not be injured or damaged because of the state of the premises, including things done or omitted to be done to the premises
- the school owes a duty of care to take reasonable precautions to prevent the abuse of a child by an individual associated with the organisation while the child is under the care, supervision or authority of the organisation
- different and sometimes greater measures may need to be taken for younger students or students with disabilities to discharge this duty of care.

5 Wellbeing and engagement strategies

Our School uses a range of proactive and pre-emptive approaches to support young people who are facing barriers to engage with learning, their environment, or relationships. These approaches are underpinned by BSEM.

5.1 Berry Street Education Model (BSEM)

Our School embeds BSEM as a whole-school approach to supporting student learning, wellbeing and engagement. BSEM is a practical approach to teaching and learning that enables staff to increase engagement with students with complex, unmet learning needs and successfully improve students' self-regulation, growth and academic achievement.

BSEM originates from Berry Street's 140-year history of supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged children to thrive. Over the past 15 years, BSEM has expanded to include providing alternative education for young people who are affected by experiencing or witnessing trauma.

While BSEM supports all students, it is specifically designed to support students who struggle with dysregulation including aggression, hyperactivity, disengagement and resistance; students who have difficulty connecting and maintaining strong relationships; and students whose stress response is triggered at seemingly inconsequential moments.

All staff at the Berry Street School will utilise the following BSEM strategies to support student wellbeing and promote a safe and inclusive learning environment:

- At all times when working with students and their parents/guardians/carers:
 - Maintain unconditional positive regard
 - Maintain high learning expectations for all students
 - Utilise a strengths-based approach when providing feedback

- Build professional excellence in BSEM and embed strategies across all five BSEM domains:
 - **Body** – building school-wide rhythms and body-regulation through a focus on physical and emotional regulation of the stress response, de-escalation in school and classroom contexts, and mindfulness opportunities throughout the school day
 - **Relationship** – increasing relational capacities in staff and students through attachment and attunement principles with specific relationship strategies with difficult to engage young people
 - **Engagement** – Employing engagement strategies that build willingness in struggling students
 - **Stamina** – Creating a strong culture of independence for academic tasks by nurturing resilience, emotional intelligence and a growth mindset
 - **Character** – Harnessing a values and character strengths approach to enable successful student self-knowledge which leads to empowered future pathways.

5.2 Supporting students in a safe and inclusive learning community

Berry Street School Senior Leadership Team will apply the following principles when planning school activities, systems and structures at each campus:

5.2.1 Staffing structure

- Maintain high staff-to-student ratios, targeting approximately 1:3
- Timetable staff to supervise students during their Vocational Education and Training learning at Registered Training Organisations' (RTO) site when possible
- Follow the Berry Street School Yard Duty and Supervision Policy
- Follow the Berry Street School Camps and Excursion Policy

5.2.2 Individualised student support

- Utilise modified timetables to support students' successful re-engagement and transition to a full timetable
- Each student and their parent/guardian/carer attends a Student Support Group (SSG) meeting each term, supported by school leadership, staff and external services (if applicable)
- Ensure each student has an *Individual Education Plan* (IEP) which outlines educational goals for the student. The SSG is responsible for developing and implementing the IEP
- Ensure each student has an individualised *Focus Plan* which outlines self-regulation and de-escalation strategies for the student.
- Support each student who identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person by providing them with the opportunity to engage with their Country and Community using their *Cultural Identity Plan/Cultural Support Plan* that has been developed in conjunction with an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO).

5.2.3 Targeted wellbeing support

- Plan for frequent one-to-one student support by the Wellbeing team
- Ensure physical breakout spaces/wellbeing rooms are available for use
- Maintain close partnership with local support services external to school
- Partner with Take Two psychologists, speech pathologists, occupational therapists and clinicians to provide student psychological assessments, and therapeutic supports, as well as reflective practice, consultations and education for staff
- Create Identified Aboriginal Education positions at campuses with significant proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students
- Ensure culturally appropriate social and emotional wellbeing resources are accessible to students
- Strengthen relationships with ACCOs through seeking support regarding their social and emotional wellbeing services
- Consult with Berry Street's Principal Practitioner for expert guidance regarding high-risk, complex student wellbeing matters.

5.2.4 Promote reconciliation, diversity and inclusion

- Implement the Narragunnawali Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) to respectfully embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures within our learning spaces and local communities, ensuring pride in identity flourishes and the longest living continuous cultures are celebrated
- Celebrate the diversity of our student population by providing a positive and respectful learning environment underpinned by a curriculum that is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion through educational opportunities. To support our students:

- who identify as LGBTQIA+, our School follows the Rainbow Tick strategies, including Stand Out groups at the campuses - student-led LGBTQIA+ inclusion
- who experience disabilities, our School educates all members in the school community about access and inclusion and ensures equitable access to programs, services and activities
- from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, our school recognises and celebrates multicultural events which provides opportunities for students to learn about diverse cultures and traditions

5.2.5 Embed wellbeing supports through predictable routines, curriculum and instructional model

- Store student mobile phones safely for the day
- Begin each school day with a Morning Circle to welcome students, frame the learning for the day, and help everyone in the community be ready to learn
- Use 'Ready to Learn' scales to understand how students are feeling and what support they need that day
- Include BSEM practices, such as positive primers and frequent brain breaks within lessons to build stamina for learning and support student self-regulation, as well as developing relationships and character
- Implement the whole-school Health & Wellbeing Curriculum which is underpinned by the School's values, expectations and the Resilience, Rights and and Respectful Relationships Program.

The following practices are prohibited at the Berry Street School:

- use of corporal punishment under any circumstances
- use of punitive measures as means for modifying student behaviour
- use of suspensions or expulsion as means of modifying student behaviour.

Restrictive interventions are measures of last resort and may only be used in situations consistent with our Restrictive Interventions Procedure.

6 Students in need of additional support

The Berry Street School is committed to providing the necessary adjustments to ensure our students are supported with their learning; emotionally and socially. All our students experience a diagnosed or imputed disability and are enrolled at our School because they require extensive adjustments to ensure they can access and participate in their education on the same basis as their peers.

6.1 Modified Timetable

Our goal is for all students to attend school on a full timetable, participating in the entire school program with the support of adjustments outlined in their IEPs, focus plans and SSGs. To achieve this some students require adjustments to their timetable and learning program

to provide additional time to work with teachers and support staff to build their capacity in the following areas when on a modified timetable:

- stamina for learning
- engagement with learning
- relationship building
- self-regulation

6.2 Outreach

Prolonged absence from school, patterns of absence from school, or the level of parent/guardian/carer support for a child's attendance at school may raise concerns about cumulative harm to a child, or concerns that the child and their family need the assistance of family services. Strategies to address extended absences of concern are outlined in the Attendance Procedure. One of the core strategies is for staff to provide outreach, which consists of staff visiting the home or meeting the student at a pre-arranged place to support re-engagement with attending school.

6.3 School Psychologists, Clinicians and Mental Health Specialists

The Berry Street School has a partnership with Berry Street's Take Two therapeutic service to provide student psychological assessments, and therapeutic supports, as well as reflective practice, consultations and education for staff.

7 Student expectations

7.1 Expectations

At the Berry Street School, the three core student expectations are:

1. Come to school prepared to learn
2. Allow others to learn
3. Everyone has the right to feel safe

The Berry Street School Code of Conduct for Students and Parents/Guardians/Carers contains a comprehensive list of expectations and responsibilities. Students and their parents/guardians/carers view the Code of Conduct on enrolment and these expectations are reinforced within the classroom, throughout the school, on excursions and camps and through SSG meetings.

In our school community, violence, bullying, racism, harassment, discrimination and other offensive and harmful behaviours are not tolerated and will be addressed in accordance with our Supporting Student Behaviours Procedure, Antibullying Policy, and Social Media and eSafety Policy. Our response will prioritise maintaining unconditional positive regard, providing education and support, and restoring relationships.

7.2 Supporting students to meet expectations

The Berry Street School considers, explores and implements positive, non-punitive interventions to support student behaviour and expectations. When a student does not follow expectations, the school uses a range of support strategies.

To support students in meeting their expectations, staff will:

- Document students' growth, successes, adjustments and concerns on the Student Information Management System (Engage Portal)
- Regularly use students' Focus Plans to support student self-regulation. Focus Plans should include the following components:
 - What students look like when they are calm and in their window of tolerance
 - What can cause students to be outside their window of tolerance
 - What it looks like when the student is outside their window of tolerance
 - Personalised de-escalation strategies and supports
- Follow the Supporting Student Behaviour Procedure when responding to dysregulated student behaviour
- Follow the Attendance Procedure when responding to unexplained and/or chronic student absences.

8 Engagement with parents/guardians/carers

The Berry Street School values the input of parents/guardians/carers and we strive to support families to engage in students' learning and build their capacity as active learners. We aim to be partners in learning with parents/guardians/carers in our school community. We promote positive interactions and create successful partnerships with parents/guardians/carers by:

- meeting regularly when issues need addressing, as well as regularly informing parents/guardians/carers about students' successes.
- providing multiple contact points and communication approaches with each parent/guardian/carer; including having a key contact staff member, and using email/message/Engage Family Application to communicate with family regularly depending on their preference
- ensuring that the Wellbeing Leader at each campus understands their responsibilities for day-to-day engagement with parents/guardians/carers and follow up on non-attendance.
 - Further detail on procedures related to non-attendance follow up can be found in the Berry Street School Attendance Procedure
- planning for a Student Support Group (SSG) meeting to occur each term. The SSG members include the student, their parents/guardian/carer, Berry Street School staff member(s), Campus Leadership (e.g., Assistant Principal, Lead Teacher, Wellbeing Leader) and other support workers/care team members where relevant

- organising regular school community events, such as open nights, information sessions and other events to build positive connections with students' parents/guardians/carers and other community members involved in the School's life.

9 Policy Evaluation

Berry Street School will collect data each year to understand the frequency and types of wellbeing, teaching and learning 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 feedback provided as part of the SSGs
- Student survey data
- Incidents data (ERIN)
- School reports
- Parent/guardian/carer opinion survey
- Case management
- Engage

This evaluation applies to the following, related procedures:

- Attendance Procedure
- Supporting Student Behaviour Procedure
- Restrictive Interventions Procedure

10 Supporting Documents and References

- Berry Street School Antibullying Policy
- Berry Street School Attendance Procedure
- Berry Street School Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Berry Street School Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Berry Street School First Aid for Students Policy
- Berry Street School Restrictive Interventions Procedure
- Berry Street School Social Media and eSafety Policy
- Berry Street School Student Support Group Agenda Template
- Berry Street School Supporting Students Behaviour Procedure
- Berry Street School Yard Duty and Supervision Policy
- Code of Conduct for students and their parents/guardians/carers
- Focus Plan template
- Berry Street Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Berry Street Diversity and Inclusion Framework

11 Version control

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Version 1.1	

If you have any queries in relation to this policy, please contact the School on 03 9429 9266.