



Swinburne Senior Secondary College

Student Engagement & Well-Being Policy

**Produced in consultation
with the school community**

**To be read in conjunction with
*Effective Schools are Engaging Schools –
Student Engagement Policy Guidelines***

February 2014

Principal: Michael O'Brien

1. School profile statement

Swinburne Senior Secondary College is located on the Belgrave/Lilydale/Alamain train line at 505 Burwood Road Hawthorn in the City of Boroondara. Swinburne receives enrolments from the City of Boroondara, the Eastern suburbs, Richmond, St Kilda, Glen Iris, South Yarra and across the metropolitan area. Each year a small number of students enrol from country Victoria and interstate. Students are enrolled in VCE (Victorian Certificate of Education), VCAL (Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning), and off-campus Community VCAL. VET (Vocational Education and Training) and ASBA (Australian School Based Apprenticeship) enrolments are offered as a component of VCE / VCAL and as pathways to further education and traineeships. While most students are from families with a high socioeconomic status, approximately one third of students receive Youth Allowance while approximately 30 students are living independently of their parents. There are low numbers of ESL students and a small cohort of International Students and Exchange Students each year. Over one third of enrolments are from private and Catholic schools.

As a single campus stand-alone senior secondary college, students enrol because of the diverse range of subjects offered but also because Swinburne offers them an environment that is unique and accommodating of individual needs. As all of our students and their families have made the decision to leave their current secondary school for the final two years of their secondary education, a component of our enrolment process is gathering data on the reasons why the young person has chosen Swinburne and how they heard about the school. These data indicate that a substantial proportion of our students were looking for broader curriculum choice and greater support for their social and emotional wellbeing and that the vast majority of students hear about this school through word of mouth from previous students and their families, health care professionals and other schools.

2. Whole-school prevention statement

Swinburne Senior Secondary College's purpose is:

- to provide innovative and relevant VCE, VCAL, and VET senior secondary and post compulsory programs in response to identified needs
- to take into account the spectrum of individual differences that exists among students and help each student achieve growth, both academically and on a personal level
- to redress disadvantage and discrimination so that all students, irrespective of gender, ethnic origins or socio-economic background, are provided with a curriculum that is challenging, comprehensive and purposeful
- to provide post secondary pathways, advice and support.

The central values of Swinburne are respect, responsibility and commitment. We aim to apply these values in our everyday dealings with each other and in the development of our programs and policies.

A key focus in student wellbeing and engagement is the Mentor program. Each student is placed in a small Mentor group (approximately 15) where one teacher, who is also one of the student's classroom teachers, takes responsibility for the student's education. This includes being the student's advocate in all matters, as well as assisting with school/subject concerns, monitoring attendance and

connectedness to the College, liaising with home and being the person who is informed of any relevant issues concerning the young person's schooling.

The next level of support for students is the College Welfare team. Regular Mentor meetings are held where Mentor teachers can express any concerns and share information with members of the Welfare team regarding their students. This information is often supported by data from the Compass system. The Welfare team, consisting of the Welfare and Assistant Welfare Managers, Year Level and Assistant Year Level Managers and the Study Support Teacher, also meet to further discuss students identified as having difficulty at school in order to maintain up-to-date information and develop strategies to support these students. The College Transition Team, consisting of the Careers and Pathways Advisor, Welfare and Year Level Managers and administration, also oversees the transition into appropriate pathways, of students leaving school.

There are also a number of outside agencies that we utilise to support students. Swinburne University Health Service is located adjacent to the College and students are encouraged to use this bulk billing medical service. The Boroondara Community Health Centre is also within easy walking distance from the school, and has a range of health care professionals including psychologists and drug and alcohol counsellors (EDAS). Headspace Hawthorn has opened in January 2014 located a couple of minutes walk from the school.

Boroondara Youth Services and Camberwell Cam Care are two resource centres for young people that offer a range of services including counselling, advice on accommodation, legal issues and relationships, and material aid. Cam Care also provides financial support each year for independent students and students from low-income families who require assistance in the purchase of school books and travel passes. Foundation Boroondara provides scholarships to students to enhance their education. Local Rotary clubs provide financial assistance for students enduring hardship. K.Y.M. offers a support program for students identified as at-risk of not completing Year 12, which has involved a worker coming in to the school fortnightly. Students who exit the school without an employment or education pathway are referred to the IELLEN (Inner East Local Learning and Employment Network).

School Building Work was completed in 2007 and includes a new technology studies building and food technology centre in the main building; refurbished classrooms, Cottage Theatre, Student Common Room, student toilets and locker rooms; a basketball court, amphitheatre and landscaping. The refurbished classrooms are large, light, airy and well equipped for art and design, business studies, humanities, mathematics and science. Whilst our students are permitted to leave the school grounds at recess and lunch times, the Student Common Room now gives them a space and opportunity to gather and interact in a central and comfortable location. The SRC (Student Representative Council) has also taken an active role in maintaining and taking responsibility for this room, as well as in organising Fun Days and the College formal evening.

3. Rights and responsibilities

Educating individuals through respect, responsibility and commitment.

Swinburne endeavours to educate individuals through the provision of innovative and relevant post-compulsory programs in response to identified needs. These programs take into account the spectrum of individual differences that exists among young people and strive to assist students in achieving growth, both academically and on a personal level.

The College makes it explicit that every member of the school community has a right to fully participate in an educational environment that is safe, supportive and inclusive, and that everyone deserves to be treated with respect and dignity.

Students are educated on how to respond to, and cope with, instances of bullying, cyberbullying, or any form of harassment or mistreatment, as well as the negative affects these behaviours have on both perpetrators and victims.*

* See Appendix 1

4. Shared expectations

Part of the enrolment process involves reading and signing an agreement to attend classes regularly and punctually, complete required coursework, act in a courteous and cooperative manner and refrain from antisocial behaviour. At this point of the enrolment process it is explained to the enrolling student and their family that all students who enrol in Year 11 are new to the school, as are approximately one third of Year 12 enrolments. As a consequence, it is imperative that students quickly feel safe and accepted at Swinburne.

Whereas a young person's expression of their individuality can lead to social and disciplinary issues in other schools, Swinburne lives up to its motto of 'Educating Individuals' by supporting diversity and individuality in our student cohort. There is no official school uniform or dress code and this serves to encourage some students to express themselves through their appearance. Similarly, social diversity in terms of sexual orientation and religious beliefs is accepted at Swinburne and not cause for discrimination or bullying.

A fundamental requirement for the effective implementation of the College purpose to educate individuals is that students feel socially, emotionally and physically safe in expressing themselves and accepting others' differences.

The key members of the College community are students, school staff and parents. The responsibilities of these separate cohorts are outlined below.

Students:

Students have a responsibility to participate fully in the College educational program and to attend regularly. Students are expected to display positive behaviours that demonstrate respect for themselves, their peers, their teachers and all other members of the College community. Students are also encouraged and supported in taking greater responsibility for their own learning and participating as members of the whole College community. This involves developing as individual learners who increasingly manage their own learning and growth by setting goals and managing resources to achieve these goals.

School Staff:

In implementing this Student Wellbeing and Engagement policy, all staff have a responsibility to interact positively with students and their families. This involves acting fairly, reasonably and consistently, as well as role-modelling a respectful attitude and a preparedness to listen and learn. For example, rather than reacting to an issue such as chronic lateness or absenteeism by focussing on how this can be dealt with and/or rectified, the initial focus could be on exploring why the student is late/absent. It is important that teachers know their students as people and as learners, and actively create and maintain a safe learning environment.

Parents:

Parents have a responsibility to promote positive educational outcomes for their children by taking an active interest in their child's educational progress and by modelling positive behaviours. Parents are also responsible for engaging in constructive communication with school staff regarding their child's learning and supporting the school in maintaining a safe and respectful learning environment for all students.

5. School actions and consequences

Corporal Punishment is prohibited in all Victorian schools. Corporal punishment must NOT be used at the school under any circumstances.

All Swinburne Senior Secondary College staff will continue to be flexible in developing individual programs and maintain a warm, welcoming and accessible manner. To maximise student engagement with the College, there will be regular acknowledgement and celebration of student achievements and successes in the classroom, at assemblies, at evening functions and on other special occasions.

Teachers have the option of registering positive student behaviour on the roll-marking system. This information can be accessed by Mentor teachers who will engage in regular contact with the families/guardians of their Mentor students to convey positive feedback regarding the student's schooling, as well as any other necessary information.

With respect to dealing with student misbehaviour, such as disrupting the learning of others or bullying, the College employs Restorative Practices. Restorative Practices considers wrongdoing to be a violation of people and relationships, and involves shifting thinking away from retribution towards repair (Thorsborne, 2001). In contrast to traditional school punishment practices, Restorative Practices have enormous educative value. Mistakes and misbehaviour are viewed as opportunities for learning, and Restorative Practices teach accountability, responsibility, empathy, collaboration and commitment to relationships, to all members of the school community (Thorsborne, 2001). This is especially important for young people who may not have an understanding of who they have hurt and to what extent, and benefit greatly from learning that whatever they do, good or bad, will have an impact on someone else (Thorsborne, 2001; Transforming Conflict, 2006). Through using language that incorporates thoughts, feelings, and outcomes for others and oneself, Restorative Practices help students develop important skills such as listening, problem-solving, expressing emotion and empowering others to take ownership of problems. Other important components of these practices for students are the high degree of consistency, clarity of expectations, limits and consequences, as well as support and nurturance.

Restorative Practices generally involve conferences, where the aim is for individuals involved to acknowledge, understand and forgive one another. As a consequence, conferencing can only be conducted where wrongdoers will acknowledge their guilt. Further, these conferences require someone impartial to coordinate them to ensure discussion is focused on condemning the act without condemning the character of the actor (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2006).

Restorative Practices at Swinburne will be employed in a staged approach from brief interactions in classrooms and semi-structured interviews with classroom teachers and/or Mentor teachers to more formal meetings (conferences) with large numbers of students and/or staff and parents. Equal emphasis is to be placed on issuing positive consequences for positive behaviours as there is on dealing with misbehaviour.

This staged approach of supporting positive behaviours which promote student engagement will be established in classroom practices and the relationship between students and their teachers. This will be further supported by Mentor teachers, who have an understanding of student backgrounds and needs, and can share this information constructively with classroom teachers.

Similarly, student misbehaviour will be dealt with by classroom teachers, according to Restorative Practice principles. Where further information, intervention and support are required, Mentor teachers will be utilised to support the classroom teachers. Depending on the misbehaviour and/or needs of a student, parents/guardians, the Careers and Pathways Advisor, Study Support Teacher, Year Level Manager and Welfare Manager may be involved. Finally, administration will be involved on a needs basis.

Exclusion from attending school through suspension will only be utilised when the above process has been exhausted or the wellbeing or safety of another student or staff member is at risk. This includes the rare occasions when a student is engaging in drug or alcohol use or aggressive or violent behaviour. On these occasions parents/guardians will be contacted and required to attend the school.

References

Restorative Justice: An Australian perspective	http://www.aic.gov.au/rjustice/australia.html
Effective Schools are Engaging Schools - Student Engagement Policy Guidelines	http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/codeofconduct.htm
School Accountability and Improvement Framework	http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/schoolimprovement/accountability/default.htm
Effective Schools are Engaging Schools	http://www.edhttp://www.thorsborne.com.auuweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/stuman/wellbeing/segpolicy.pdf
Restorative Justice	http://www.thorsborne.com.au
Disability Standards for Education	http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/disability/handbook/legislation.htm
Safe Schools	http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/safety/bullying/default.htm http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/safety/bull

	ying/cyber/default.htm http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/elearningsupportservices/www/default.htm
Charter of Human Rights	http://www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/programs/multicultural/tchhrcharter.htm http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_act/cohrara2006433/
Equal Opportunity Act	http://www.det.vic.gov.au/hrweb/divequity/eeo/eeoact.htm
Education and Training Reform Act 2006	http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/directions/reviewleg.htm
VIT Teacher Code of Conduct	http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/files/documents/1543_Code-of-Conduct-June-2008.pdf
Restorative Justice in schools	http://www.transformingconflict.org/Restorative_Justice_in_School.htm

APPENDIX 1 :
Information to Students : Bullying and Harassment
Definitions

Harassment is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome or offensive to a person. **Bullying** is repeated oppression, physical or psychological, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group.

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying which is carried out through an internet service such as email, chat room, discussion group, online social networking, instant messaging or web pages. It can also include bullying through mobile phone technologies such as SMS. It may involve text or images (photos, drawings)

Examples of cyberbullying behaviour are:

- teasing and being made fun of
- spreading of rumours online
- sending unwanted messages
- defamation.

Cyberbullying can happen to anyone and the bully can act anonymously if they want. People can also be bullied online by groups of people such as class groups or collective members of an online community.

It is important for the school to provide a safe and friendly environment for students and staff and to encourage care, courtesy and respect for others. All persons have a legal right to protection from harassment under the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act and the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act.

The effects of harassment or bullying include

- poor health – anxiety, depression
- lower self esteem
- reduced study performance
- missed classes, social withdrawal
- reduced career prospects

If a student sees another person being harassed or bullied they should tell the person that you witnessed the incident and advise them to report it to an appropriate person. However, 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. Harassment is usually directed at a person because of their gender, race, creed or abilities. It can be subtle or explicit.

Subtle: (The most common)

- Offensive staring and leering.
- Unwanted comments about physical appearance and sexual preference.
- Racist or smutty comments or jokes.
- Questions about another's sexual activity.
- Persistent comments about a person's private life or family.
- Physical contact e.g. purposely brushing up against another's body.
- Offensive name calling.

Explicit: (obvious)

- Grabbing, aggressive hitting, pinching and shoving etc.
- Unwelcome patting, touching, embracing.
- Repeated requests for dates, especially after refusal.
- Offensive gestures, jokes, comments, letters, phone calls or e-mail.
- Sexually and/or racially provocative remarks.
- Displays of sexually graphic material– pornography.
- Requests for sexual favours.

Extreme forms of sexual harassment will lead to criminal prosecution.

Bullying can involve such things as

- grabbing, aggressive staring, hitting, pinching kicking, pushing and shoving.
- publicly excluding a person from your group
- taking or breaking a person's property
- knocking a person's books or belongings out of their hands or off their desk
- teasing a person because of their looks

Cyberbullying

Being involved in online spaces – either at home or at school - requires students to behave responsibly. This includes:

- the language you use and the things you say
- how you treat others
- respecting people's property (eg copyright)
- visiting appropriate places.

Behaving safely online means:

- protecting your own privacy and personal information (we used to call it 'stranger danger')
- selecting appropriate spaces to work and contribute
- protecting the privacy of others (this can be sharing personal information or images)
- being proactive in letting someone know if there is something is 'not quite right'. At home this would be a parent or carer, at school a teacher.

If you are being harassed or bullied you should:

- Tell the person you don't like what they are doing and you want them to stop.
- Discuss the matter with a student leader or a teacher/coordinator that you feel comfortable with.

Your concerns will be taken seriously. All complaints will be treated confidentially.

Endorsed by School Council and effective as of: (insert date)

REVIEWED Annually