

Student Engagement Policy 2017 Belvoir Special School - Wodonga 5222

Mission Statement: To create an engaging and supportive environment that nurtures each student's potential to learn, grow, and experience success and community enrichment.



If a student doesn't know how to read, we teach.

If a student doesn't know how to swim, we teach.

If a student doesn't know how to multiply, we teach.

If a student doesn't know how to behave, we teach.

Tom Herner 1998

“Our Goal is to teach each student to be as independent as possible”

Belvoir Special School is a multi-mode specialist school in Wodonga which provides a high quality educational program for students with mild, moderate and profound intellectual disabilities. Around 45% of our students have a co-morbid diagnosis of Autism as well as an intellectual disability. Students range in age from five to eighteen years of age.

In 2014 the school moved to a brand new purpose built facility which has been constructed for a peak enrolment of around 220 students. Current student population is 190.

To attend the school students must meet the state-wide eligibility criteria and are enrolled at Belvoir Special School after consultation with parents, previous schools or kindergartens and appropriate paramedic personnel if needed, in accordance with the school's documented enrolment policy.

Our school's philosophy is reflected in its programs and based on the belief that children learn best in a co-operative environment that is happy, challenging, supportive and non-threatening. Belvoir is a School Wide Positive Behaviour Support School and has developed a school culture that is reflected by the ideals of SW-PBS.

As a school we encourage active involvement and participation of students, staff, parents, caregivers, volunteers and the wider community.

Belvoir is committed to develop lifelong learners who are encouraged to pursue their individual strengths and talents. Our aim is to enable all students who graduate from Belvoir to live an 'enviable life' which allows them to achieve all their dreams. To do this we require committed teachers who see the special characteristics of all of our students and will strive to ensure each individual feels safe, is confident and valued as a person.

Whole School Prevention Statement

"If you don't know how you want the correct behaviour to look the student never will."

Dan Petro 2017

Belvoir aims to ensure that positive and respectful relationships are maintained between all members of the school community. Primary prevention and continuous early intervention is the absolute key for all students within our school and this starts with the development of strong respectful relationships between all parties and all members of the school community.

The staff concentrate on consistent, explicit teaching delivered via the method which best suits each individual student. This is required in all classrooms to ensure engaging activities, clear expectations and positive behaviours and routines are developed and maintained.

Once expected behaviours have been taught staff are required to reinforce these expected behaviours through verbal or visual means. This can include a positive reinforcing comment, non-verbal indicator (eg. Thumbs up) or a tangible reward (eg. Purple Moment)

As a school we believe the most successful way in which to foster positive relationships between our staff, students and parents is to **"catch them being good"**. **A ratio of 6 to 8 positive responses to each negative adult/child interaction is expected.**

Students who consistently display positive behaviours within the school will be rewarded and acknowledged in a variety of ways. All classrooms will be expected to maintain a system of rewards that may include, but are not limited to:

- Student of the week awards
- Friendship and encouragement awards
- Presentations at assemblies
- Acknowledgement of success through the newsletter

Carefully designed positive reinforcement schedules are utilised to reinforce desired behaviours. The type of schedule is dependant upon the nature of the student, the type of disability and the range of behaviours exhibited. Examples of these may include a contingent reinforcement schedule that recognises efforts or a visual schedule with the use of an individually motivating activity.

Alongside a system of positive rewards each class should also maintain a number of preventative measures to prevent inappropriate behaviours and de-escalate any situations that should occur.

School Actions and Consequences

Students learn best in a calm, safe, supportive and respectful environment where routines are followed and adhered to. This is best achieved by thoughtful planning in classroom arrangement, lesson organisation and development, and a student personal behaviour management plan that establishes positive, clear, fair classroom and safety rules, responsibilities and routines for learning and behaviour. **Prevention is better than Intervention.**

School actions and consequences includes a framework of least-to-most intrusive interventions used to address distracting and disruptive behaviours. A crucial feature of such interventions is the use of planned positive corrective language balanced by regular encouragement and feedback.

Strategies for managing challenging behaviours and addressing environmental and sensory needs/tolerances

When a student is not following one of the school rules strategies need to be implemented to ensure the safety of all students and staff is maintained and the learning environment is disrupted as little as possible. The initial step of any intervention is to determine the function of the inappropriate behaviour being exhibited. Using a Functional Behaviour Assessment, once the purpose of the behaviour has been established, is the most effective behaviour modification strategy can then be employed.

For the majority of students these strategies will be dependent upon the type of behaviour being displayed and should always begin with the least intrusive intervention possible.

Such interventions may include, but are not limited to the following.

- Staff need to tactically ignore inappropriate behaviour. This is especially important for attention seeking behaviours.
- Rule reminder. Gestural or visual prompt to be used in the first instance
- Second rule reminder. A verbal reminder with the student asked to state the appropriate rule if this is possible.
- Time in a different program for independent or assisted sensory regulation
- Redirection to a positive task or game

Where a student's behaviour continues to interfere with their own or the rights of others to learn and participate in an activity, this student may be withdrawn from the activity or from their classroom for periods of time - up to 15 minutes. If this option is used they must remain supervised at all times.

The active management of sanctions will assist staff in determining any environmental or sensory needs that are contributing to the student's inappropriate behaviour. This is especially the case with students who may have lower levels of understanding and whose behaviour is managed more by sensory inputs and specific teaching.

During all classes where students are exhibiting inappropriate behaviours immediate positive reinforcements should be given to those students demonstrating positive behaviours in accordance with the school rules.

Once again the explicit teaching of appropriate behaviour to all students **MUST** occur on a daily basis and the reinforcement of these appropriate behaviours is paramount to the success of any behaviour management strategies.

Individual De-Escalation Plans

Approximately 20% of students may require an individualised de-escalation plan. This includes both the use of Positive Behaviour Support strategies and Behaviour Management strategies that will be used if the student continues to escalate. These are systems for students who display continual inappropriate behaviour or for those displaying High-Risk behaviours.

Individual Plans will be devised in conjunction with parents/carers, psychologists, psychiatrists, case managers, teachers, allied Health staff and other related professionals. These plans will be shared across all relevant staff and the strategies from these will be followed and reinforced by all staff.

De-escalation plans need to be individualised for each student as the same behaviour could have different functions. For example a student may hit a staff member to communicate a need to them, while another child may hit another student because they are angry at them and wish to get even. In both instances the behaviour management plan and possible sanctions that would be imposed upon each student are completely different. Whilst one student may be suspended the other may require the input of Allied Health staff to develop a communication plan. **Therefore it is impossible to have a blanket sanction for any one particular behaviour.**

De-escalation Plans will include strategies for Behaviour Modification as well as sanctions for those students whose behaviour is impacting on the rights of teachers to teach and students to learn. Professional Development sessions will be offered during the year to ensure all staff have a thorough understanding as to how a behaviour modification plan is established.

All Individual Behaviour Plans will be supported and monitored by the school's leadership. It is expected that these plans will be checked and modified as required on a termly basis.

Suspension

The decision to suspend a student is at the Principal's discretion.

Guidelines for the suspension of any student are as follows

- A student whose behaviour seriously interferes with the safety, the right to learn, and general well-being of staff or students, may be suspended for a maximum period of 5 days as per DET guidelines.
- Following DET guidelines, a suspension conference will be convened as soon as possible following the incident, between the school, the student and their parents/carers. In the

majority of cases this conference should take place prior to any suspension being put into place.

- If a suspension is required appropriate work will be provided to the student to complete while they are absent from school if the suspension is for 3 or more days.
- A Return to School Plan will be developed and agreed upon before the student comes back to school.
- Regional intervention is required where any student is suspended for a period totalling more than 15 school days in any one school year.
- Every effort will be made to assist students develop appropriate behaviours with assistance from parents, allied health, DHHS and any other relevant services.

Expulsion

The school recognises that where an individual's behaviour persists to such a magnitude that the safety of the school community and the learning environment is greatly interfered with, and suspensions have not brought about a change in the student's attitude and behaviour towards school rules, this may then result in expulsion from this school in accordance with DET guidelines at the principal's discretion.



Rights and Responsibilities

The emphasis of our student engagement policy needs to be on **teaching our expectations to the students** and their ability to understand these expectations rather than the consequences that will be imposed upon a student.

All members of the school community have the right to:

- be treated with respect and dignity
- teach and learn in a safe and happy environment
- expect positive comments from staff regarding student efforts at school

Students have the responsibility to:-

- keep themselves and others safe
- care for themselves, other students, staff and school property
- behave in socially acceptable ways, both within and outside school
- know the school rules to their level of understanding

All staff have the responsibility to:-

- create a learning environment that is engaging and interesting for all students
- create an environment best suited to the individual's needs and level of tolerance
- be understanding, fair and consistent
- promote and model positive behaviour and give attention to positive behaviour
- use more (8:1) positive reinforcement strategies than negative
- follow the protocol for a Functional Behaviour Assessment to endeavour to work out why a behaviour is occurring and to address the reason
- teach new skills to replace undesirable behaviour
- work together with the student's family to develop an appropriate individual learning plan that may include a de-escalation plan
- implement individual de-escalation plans that are put in place as deemed necessary
- develop a teaching and learning program best suited to the individual
- use positive corrective practices
- minimise hostility and use strategies to avoid unnecessary confrontation
- display school rules and behaviour expectations matrix within their classroom
- discuss, encourage awareness and actively teach an understanding of these rules
- speak to students in a tone they would like to be spoken to
- record individual behaviour incidents via SWIS and identify triggers for these and modify a students program accordingly.
- explore a variety of strategies to find the most effective one for each individual student

“If you aren't effectively challenging your students, they will learn how to challenge you.”

Dan Petro 2017

Parents have the responsibility to:

- ensure that their children attend school on a daily basis
- participate in the development of their child's learning plan
- be a part of the student support group
- keep the school informed of any changes to a student's individual circumstances
- regularly review the feedback they receive regarding their child's progress towards the achievement of their individual goals.
- support the Belvoir school community in carrying out its core business

Shared Expectations

“Equality does not mean that everyone gets the same thing. It means that everyone gets what they need.”

Aristotle

As a Positive Behaviour Support school the emphasis on our program is to ensure that all students are given the best chance possible to succeed. There is an expectation that the school will make every effort to provide opportunities for all students across the school. This expectation exists at all year levels and across all levels of disability.

Student and staff expectations regarding behaviour are expressed within our expectations matrix, Appendix I:

It is an expectation that all students have an individual education plan established in consultation with parents and relevant professionals. In the last three years of school the focus is on transition to adult programs, work or further education. This includes work experience, participation in TAFE or VET programs, volunteering and increased responsibility around the school and community.

Can't Do = We Teach

Won't Do = We Motivate



Student Attendance

Belvoir has an expectation that all students will attend school on a daily basis and attendance at school is compulsory for all students. We are also mindful that a number of our students have significant health issues and will always work with families to maximise student attendance as far as possible.

Strategies in place to support student attendance include:

- Alterations to school bussing routes to accommodate individual student needs
- Rewarding students who have high levels of attendance
- Reporting levels of student absence as part of student semester reports
- Adopting consistent and rigorous procedures to monitor and record student absences
- All student absences are followed up promptly by school office staff and welfare staff
- Support through home and hospital visits as required

All members of the school community have a shared responsibility to ensure school attendance is maintained. A decrease in student absenteeism of 10% is expected in 2017. The average number of student absences in 2016 was 29.7 days per student. The 2017 aim is 25 days per student averaged across the school.

School Bullying and Cyber Bullying

Whilst bullying has not been a significant issue at Belvoir over the past couple of years, preventative measures need to be in place to ensure that any incidents of bullying are quickly stamped out.

Such measures include:

- Active supervision of students at recess and lunchtimes whilst they are in the yard
- Handing in mobile phones and other technology at the beginning of the day
- Completion of bullying surveys within the school
- Following up with any reports of bullying with both parents and the student concerned
- The application of restorative justice procedures where these are applicable
- The option for students to speak with one of our internal Primary Welfare staff to discuss issues of concern to them
- The use of external counsellors for both students and their families where required

The incidents of cyber bullying may increase into the future as more students are able to access computer and internet resources, as well as an increase in the use of mobile phones.

The school has a mobile phone policy which is designed to reduce the risk of inappropriate mobile phone use whilst students are at school. Active supervision of students whilst they are using computers able to access the internet is also expected of staff.

Parents also have a significant role to play to ensure students remain safe whilst using the internet. Any issues with regard to cyber bullying should be reported to the school and parents are encouraged to monitor their children whilst they are using the internet or their mobile phones.

This policy was last ratified by School Council on: 15th November 2017

	This policy was first ratified by School Council on		13 February 2010	
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