

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all students and members of our school community understand:

- (a) our commitment to providing a safe and supportive learning environment for students
- (b) expectations for positive student behaviour
- (c) support available to students and families
- (d) our school's policies and procedures for responding to inappropriate student behaviour.

Travancore 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.

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POLICY

1. School profile

Travancore School is a specialist school that addresses the educational needs of children and young people with the most serious mental health problems and disorders. Travancore works in partnership the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) through the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) and Orygen Youth Health (OYH).

To improve the mental health of young people five to 18 years old the staff of Travancore work in three ways, providing direct education programs at a number of locations, the provision of outreach services to foster the engagement of students in education and vocational programs and presenting professional learning programs to the broader educational community in the area of mental health and education of young people.

Travancore is a multi-site school located on RCH MH and OYH sites.

The school delivers programs through collaboration with mental health services. The school also has a commitment to build the capacity of teachers and other staff in the community to assist students with mental health problems. A range of professional learning experiences and consultations around mental health in educational settings are delivered across the educational community to develop skills and knowledge.

Our programs include:

- Outreach for outpatients of RCH MH and OYH to support connection to school or further education, engagement in learning and educational transitions
- A specialised school refusal intervention program (In2School) for RCH MH consumers (located at RCHMH Travancore site)
- Operation Newstart Western, an outdoor adventure program for adolescents (14-16yrs) at risk of disengaging from education, attending schools in Western Melbourne and Brimbank Melton Areas
- An inpatient school program (located at the Banksia Ward, Royal Children's Hospital in Parkville) for 12-17 year olds;
- Educational program and for adolescents engaged with Orygen Youth Health (located at OYH sites in Parkville and Sunshine)
- Capacity building programs for teachers and support staff through provision of professional

2. School values, philosophy and vision

Travancore School's aim is to provide a safe and supportive environment which supports young people with mental health difficulties in education; provides pathways and options to build successful educational transitions; and develops mental health awareness across educational communities.

We do this by:

- providing individual programs appropriate to needs and abilities
- working cooperatively with other relevant agencies
- supporting home schools in the development of appropriate support programs e.g. calmer classrooms
- advocating for the educational needs of all students.

At Travancore School we create a positive and supportive culture through living and promoting our values.

Collaboration-To work with a positive intent and purpose toward the mental health goals of students in our care across community organisations

Optimism-To engage and apply patterns of thoughts and behaviours which focus upon hope and future positive possibilities

Respectful Practice -To operate with the highest levels of professionalism and accountability, bringing sensitivity and respect to all our working relationships

Trust -To develop and demonstrate confidential models of practice that enhances integrity in our professional work.

Innovation -To utilise a creative pedagogy to improve prevention and intervention strategies using current research

3. Engagement strategies

Travancore School works with students whose engagement with learning has been interrupted. We seek to reengage all students with learning through reconnection to formal education, training or employment.

We believe that students can only reach their full educational potential when they are happy, healthy and safe, and when there is a positive school culture that is fair and respectful to engage and support their learning.

The school will:

- create an engaging social environment that encourages a positive and successful learning experience
- provide students with a safe learning environment where the risk of harm is minimised and students feel physically and emotionally secure
- provide support for individuals disengaged from their learning, by developing positive behaviours
- provide genuine opportunities for student participation and student voice
- maintain and grow a school environment based on positive behaviours and values.

To realise our purpose, our school has in place a range of strategies to promote engagement, positive behaviour and respectful relationships for every student. We recognise the need to provide our students with extra social, emotional or educational support and strategies to flourish at school.

Based on the school's values, student needs and capacity, the school works collaboratively with students and stakeholders to establish fair and respectful practices and intervention strategies. There are also intervention strategies in place to address behaviours that negatively impact on the learning environment.

A summary of the universal, targeted and individual engagement strategies used by our school is included below:

Universal strategies

- creating a culture that is inclusive, engaging and supportive
- high and consistent expectations of all staff, students and parents/carers
- delivering a relevant curriculum targeted to individual goals
- ensuring that all programs are safe and welcoming to students by providing a minimum of 2 staff to each learning program
- providing each student with an induction to the relevant school program
- providing students an opportunity to develop personal goals
- teachers will adopt a range of teaching and assessment approaches to effectively respond to the diverse learning styles, strengths and needs of our students
- providing students the opportunity to investigate and share their strengths and interests
- teachers will collect and consider information on an individual's specific needs by consulting with stakeholders and incorporate this information into their learning plan
- prioritise positive relationships between staff and students and acknowledge positive behaviour and student achievement in the classroom
- all staff will prioritise calming and de-escalation strategies when responding to challenging behaviour
- analysing and responding to a range of school data such as attendance, goal achievement and student, parent/carer and mental health partners feedback data
- celebrations and rewards will be regularly built in to programs to acknowledge student achievement
- welcoming all parents/carers and being responsive to them as partners in learning
- providing carefully planned transition programs to support students moving between Travancore School programs and further learning
- providing students the opportunity to contribute to and give feedback on school operations through their teachers, whenever they have any questions or concerns
- engaging in school wide positive behaviour support strategies with our staff and students, which includes programs such as:
 - Respectful Relationships
 - Safe Schools

- develop programs, incursions and excursions to promote healthy behaviours.

Targeted strategies

- connect all Koorie students with Koorie support (DET or MH based)
- engage with *Lookout* for all students in out of home care
- access other appropriate community supports for students with specific needs i.e. refugees
- provide health promotion and social skills development in response to needs identified by student referral, assessment and behaviours
- apply a trauma-informed approach to working with students who have experienced trauma.

Individual strategies

Strategies to support attendance and engagement of individual students include:

- meet with student and their case manager to talk about how best to help the student engage with school
- positive support plans and/or individual learning plans include attendance or engagement strategies
- implement relevant environmental changes, for example access to a quiet space, individual timetable, access to 1:1 support
- source additional information from relevant professionals to support students with complex needs
- developing collaborative goals with treating clinician, families and other schools or services that are supporting the student.

4. Identifying students in need of support

Our school will utilise the following strategies to identify students in need of extra support:

- collection of relevant personal information gathered upon commencement
- regular discussion with key mental health staff
- communication with key support personnel at mainstream settings
- changes in student engagement, behaviour and achievement observed by classroom teachers
- intensive discussions with parents and carers regarding relevant information.

5. 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:

- to be heard
- to be provided with an appropriate learning program
- to participate in the program without interference
- to be treated fairly and respectfully
- to have confidentiality respected
- to learn in a safe and secure environment
- to have a voice in their own learning goals
- to have an active role in the evaluation of their learning
- to information and support around self-care in the learning environment
- to be informed of their educational options.

To the best of their ability, students have the responsibility to:

- set learning goals
- participate in the learning process
- contribute to a safe environment
- allow others to work on their own goals without interference
- report bullying, intimidation, discrimination or unsafe behaviour to a staff member
- treat others with respect
- communicate their needs.

Students who may have a complaint or concern about something that has happened at our school are encouraged to speak to their parents or carers and approach a trusted teacher, a member of the school leadership team or their mental health clinician.

6. Student behavioural expectations

Attendance and behaviour

Concerning behaviours and irregular attendance will be responded to through a staged response with a focus on positive prevention. Where unhelpful or concerning behaviour occurs, the response will provide opportunities to understand and demonstrate appropriate behaviour.

Preventative strategies include:

- understanding the student's background and needs
- building meaningful relationships with students
- providing opportunities for meaningful student participation and feedback
- clarifying student learning goals
- providing consistent learning environments
- scaffolding the student's learning program
- involving and supporting other significant adults e.g. clinicians, teachers, parents/carers,
- convening/participating in support group meetings
- developing individualised flexible learning, behaviour or attendance plans
- providing broader educational programs, for example experiential learning, work education, camps/outdoor education/creative arts
- encourage students to set meaningful educational goals
- Involving other community support agencies to assist achievement of student goals
- SWPBIS frameworks to develop behaviour matrices to support each individualised program.

Responding to behaviours of concern

At Travancore School we:

- seek first to know each student, their school history, assessments, and strengths
- see behaviour as something separate to the student
- believe behaviour is communicating a need and has to be addressed in a proactive and constructive way
- prevent concerning behaviour by modifying the environment and changing what is happening to the student
- teach, develop and strengthen positive alternative behaviours – we explicitly teach social skills, as opposed to only focusing on undesirable behaviours
- provide positive consequences for desired behaviours and tell the student explicitly what they are doing that is helping them fit into the learning environment
- presume positive intent from the student and enter conversations with them with a positive mindset
- set SMART goals and develop strategies to maximize success while also positively reinforcing any approximations of the goal, to increase the chances of that behaviour reoccurring.

Each program will articulate a staged response to behaviours of concern. This will be outlined in program procedures and form a consistent approach by all program staff. Corporal punishment is prohibited in our school and will not be used in any circumstance.

7. Engaging with families and stakeholders

Travancore School values the input of parents and carers, and we strive to support families to engage in their child's learning. We aim to be partners in learning with parents and carers in our school community. The work of Travancore School is dependent on many collaborative relationships with its key stakeholders; RCHMH, OYH, parents/carers and schools in the community. Travancore School values stakeholder input into its operations and curriculum offerings and seeks feedback through partner school, parent and clinician surveys, and from mental health service representatives on School Council. The school will support stakeholders to engage in the student's learning and help build stakeholder capacity in providing ongoing assistance to students.

The school will create successful partnerships with stakeholders by:

- integrating the skills and knowledge of stakeholders when planning for the engagement and learning needs of individual students
- conducting timely and effective communications with all relevant parties
- involving mental health partners as participants in school decision-making
- building and disseminating knowledge of resources and services from the community for the benefit of students and all stakeholders ensuring that all parents/caregivers have access to our school policies and procedures, available on our school website
- maintaining an open, respectful line of communication between parents and staff
- clarifying communication options and processes available through each specific program for all stakeholders.

8. Evaluation

Travancore School will collect data each year to understand the frequency and types of engagement 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 survey
- student goal attainment data
- parent survey
- case manager survey
- schools survey
- attendance data
- incident data

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Other relevant school documents include:

- School philosophy policy
- Digital Technologies Policy
- Child Safety Policy
- Bullying Prevention Policy (under development)
- Program Specific Procedures

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last updated on 1 August, 2019 and is scheduled for review in August 2022.