

INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY POLICY 2024

(Includes Equal Opportunity and Sexual Harassment)



Help for non-English speakers.

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact reception 9309 6258.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to explain Jacana School for Autism's commitment to making sure every member of our school community, regardless of their background or personal attributes, is treated with respect and dignity. This policy should be read alongside the following Department of Education and Training policies:

- Equal Opportunity and Human Rights - Students
- For staff, the Respectful Workplaces policies (including Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Workplace Bullying) as these whole of Department policies apply to all staff at Jacana School for Autism.

Policy

Definitions

Personal attribute: a personal characteristic that is protected by State or Commonwealth anti-discrimination legislation. These include: race, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious belief or activity, political belief or activity, age, intersex status, physical features, pregnancy, carer and parental status, breastfeeding, marital or relationship status, lawful sexual activity, employment activity, industrial activity, expunged homosexual conviction or personal association with anyone who is identified with reference to any protected attribute.

Direct discrimination: unfavourable treatment because of a person's protected attribute.

Indirect discrimination: imposing an unreasonable requirement, condition or practice that disadvantages a person or group of people with a protected attribute.

Sexual harassment: unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature towards another person which could reasonably be expected to make that other person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated. It may be physical, verbal, visual or written.

Disability harassment: an action taken in relation to the person's disability that is reasonably likely, in all the circumstances, to humiliate, offend, intimidate or distress the person.

Vilification: conduct that incites hatred towards or revulsion or severe ridicule of a person or group of people on the basis of their race or religion.

Victimisation: subjecting a person or threatening to subject them to detrimental treatment because they (or their associate) have made an allegation of discrimination or harassment on the basis of a protected attribute (or asserted their rights under relevant policies or law).

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Inclusion and diversity

Jacana School for Autism strives to provide a safe, inclusive and supportive school environment which values the human rights of all students and staff.

Jacana School for Autism's (JSA) mission is to foster resilience and lifelong learning enabling students to be active participants in family and community life. Students are supported by a committed professional multi-disciplinary team, working towards addressing the student's cognitive, emotional, social and creative development. The school embraces the Child Safe Standards by developing a proactive safe environment for all students which includes the school's choice of external providers to deliver additional programs for the students. The school offers possibilities and opportunities for a range of working methods and individual treatment to ensure that no student is excluded from companionship and participation in the school.

Jacana School for Autism is committed to creating a school community where all members of our school community are welcomed, accepted and treated equitably and with respect regardless of their backgrounds or personal attributes such as race, language, religious beliefs, gender identity, disability or sexual orientation so that they can participate, achieve and thrive at school.

Jacana School for Autism acknowledges and celebrates the diversity of backgrounds and experiences in our school community, and we will not tolerate behaviours, language or practices that label, stereotype or demean others. At Jacana School for Autism, we value the human rights of every student, and we take our obligations under anti-discrimination laws and the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities seriously.

Jacana School for Autism will:

- Actively nurture and promote a culture where everyone is treated with respect and dignity.
- ensure that students are not discriminated against (directly or indirectly) and where necessary, are reasonably accommodated to participate in their education and school activities (eg school events, performances, excursions/incursions) on the same basis as their peers.
- acknowledge and respond to the diverse needs, identities and strengths of all students.
- encourage empathy and fairness towards others.
- challenge stereotypes that promote prejudicial and biased behaviours and practices
- contribute to positive learning, engagement and wellbeing outcomes for students.
- respond to complaints and allegations appropriately and ensure that students are not victimised.

JSA strives to continually develop highly customised teaching and learning programs in line with Victoria Department of Education and Training (DET) Disability Education standards to ensure all students are supported to learn within an inclusive educational environment. This includes:

- A student with a disability, is able to access education, participates in education and is treated in the same basis as any other student.
- An Indigenous Australian and a person from a culturally and linguistically diverse background is treated in the same basis as any other student.
- A student who identifies as LGBTIQ+, is able to access education, participates in education and is supported in safe and inclusive learning environments.
- Orienting teacher education through continuous in-service development in order to developing flexible teaching-learning methodologies.
- Welcoming diversity and involvement of parents and the community

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Bullying, unlawful discrimination, harassment, vilification and other forms of inappropriate behaviour targeting individuals or groups because of their personal attributes will not be tolerated at Jacana School for Autism. We will take appropriate measures, consistent with our *Student Engagement and Wellbeing 2021* policy to respond to students who demonstrate these behaviours at our school.

Students who may have experienced or witnessed this type of behaviour are supported to communicate at their level of cognitive and communication development, to let their teachers, education support staff, parents or carers know about those behaviours to ensure that inappropriate behaviour can be addressed. Students that are involved in bullying or harassing others on the basis of their personal attributes will be supported to understand the impact of their behaviour.

Reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities

Jacana School for Autism also understands that it has a legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate students with disabilities. A reasonable adjustment is a measure or action taken to assist students with disabilities to participate in their education on the same basis as their peers. Reasonable adjustments will be made for students with disabilities in consultation with the student, their parents or carers, their teachers and if appropriate, their treating practitioners. Our school may consult through Student Support Group processes and in other less formal ways. For more information about support available for students with disabilities and communicating with us in relation to a student's disability, please contact the Assistant Principal- Excellence in Teaching and Learning.

Reasonable adjustments are made to the education program ensure all students are able to ability to achieve learning outcomes, are able to participate in courses or programs and develop independence.

- Provide increased access and participation of students in the curriculum through recommendations by therapists in their field of expertise.
- Access to community providers such as TAFE, SBAT and VET providing opportunities for senior secondary students to attend VPC subjects off site.
- Access to work experience both schools based, and community based.
- Individual therapeutic resources to access education provided.
 - Speech pathology consultancy to address communication, language, social development and mealtime safety.
 - Occupational therapy consultancy to address sensory, physical and mobility needs and independence in activities of daily living.
 - Psychology consultancy to address cognitive, social and emotional development can be accessed via referral to SSSO network when needed.
- Integration – parents/carers and teachers negotiate part-time placement of appropriate students into their local neighbourhood or chosen school to gain experience in mainstream education.
- To recruit staff with Special Education qualifications and encourage all staff to undertake Special Education qualifications to deepen their conceptual understanding of student abilities, conditions and learning styles. Recommendation 4 (State of Victoria (Department of Education and Training), 2016, p. 9)
- Provide comprehensive transition programs for new students and transitional pathways for exiting students.
- Provide transitional support within the school as students change between classrooms throughout the year and at the end of year.

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Students, or an associate of the student, are consulted regarding the reasonable adjustments made to their learning program.

- SSGs
- Student Leadership Team
- Excursions within the community
- Teacher feedback

To ensure all staff act in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act and the Disability Standards for Education by making appropriate adjustments to their programs and to ensure all students are able to engage with and participate in education on the same basis as other students.

To provide guidance and description of the necessary actions required of an educational setting within DET to ensure inclusive education practices are met. These include:

- A person with a disability, is able to access education, participates in education and is treated in the same basis as any other student.
- An Indigenous Australian and a person from a culturally and linguistically diverse background is treated in the same basis as any other student.
- Reasonable adjustments are made to the education program to ensure all students are able to achieve their learning outcomes and are able to participate in courses or programs to develop independence.
- Students, or an associate of the student, are consulted regarding the reasonable adjustments made to their learning program.
 - ✓ That reasonable adjustment would be less disruptive and intrusive and no less beneficial for the student.
 - ✓ Changed over the period of a student's education or training.
 - ✓ Adjustments are made in a reasonable time.
- Orienting teacher education through continuous in-service development in order to developing flexible teaching-learning methodologies.
- Welcoming diversity and involvement of parents and the community

Establishing a culturally safe environment

At Jacana School for Autism, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of Aboriginal culture, values and practices are respected.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal students, we recognise the link between Aboriginal culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal community to have a voice and presence in our school planning, policies, and activities.

We have developed the following strategies to promote cultural safety in our school community:

- Begin events and meetings with a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of Country as a standing agenda item. Use this as an opportunity to pause and reflect or open a discussion.
- Fly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags on school grounds.
- Celebrate the local Aboriginal community in communications with students, staff, volunteers and families. Share information through school newsletters, school assemblies, parent information nights.
- Lead on safety and inclusion for all Aboriginal students and their families. Learn more about Aboriginal histories and cultures, both locally and across Australia. Speak with respect and confidence about Aboriginal culture, knowledge systems and people.

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- Acknowledge and draw on the existing knowledge of Aboriginal students and their families.
- Use Koorie Engagement Support Officers (KESOs) to provide advice to government schools about creating culturally inclusive learning environments.
- Express zero tolerance of racism in your statement of commitment to child safety included in your Child Safety Policy and other documents.
- Address racism from students, staff, volunteers or visitors directly. Make sure racist speech or actions are always dealt with, and the culture of the school works to prevent incidents from occurring.
- Work with the local Aboriginal community to build staff, volunteer and student knowledge and respect for Aboriginal culture and to promote cultural inclusion.
- Find out about the Traditional Owners of the land/s where the school is situated at the Map of Indigenous Australia and learn about the importance of acknowledging Traditional Owners.
- Engage with local Aboriginal communities via Traditional Owner groups, corporations, or the Registered Aboriginal Party to review cultural safety in school environment, systems and processes.

Implementation

A person with a disability is able to access education, participates in education and is treated in the same basis as any other student.

- All students at JSA meet the criteria of support through the Program for Students with Disabilities providing the school with resources to assist with adhering to the obligations of the Disability Discrimination Act.
- All students are provided with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for their level of cognitive development including strategies and activities that are suitable for their chronological age.
- Develop school based resources and assessment tools for Victorian Curriculum areas particularly Levels A- to 2 (Recommendation 1 (State of Victoria (Department of Education and Training), 2016, p. 9)
- Dual enrolment at JSA and a local neighbourhood mainstream school can occur when.
 - integration has been successful for a student but who still needs time in a smaller tailored environment.
 - This may lead to full integration of students into mainstream education.
- To provide access to the Victorian Curriculum and appropriate assessment tools such as the Abilities Based Learning and Education Support (ABLES) Assessment Tools
- Specialist education programs in the Arts, Food Technology and Physical Education.

Orienting teacher education through continuous in-service development in order to developing flexible teaching-learning methodologies.

- Support & utilise DET initiatives, directions, mandates and directions.
 - FISO
 - Powerful learning
 - Provide opportunity for all staff to undertake Disability Standards for Education eLearning.
- To provide regular profession learning opportunities focused on supporting all students to access the curriculum through strategies to enable communication, use of Positive Behaviour, self and co- regulation, social and emotional development and broaden the range of Autism specific evidence-based strategies embedded within the student educational program. Recommendation 4 (State of Victoria (Department of Education and Training), 2016, p. 9)
- Continue to research and trial evidence-based strategies which may be effective for our students.
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- Provide a mentoring program through Sub School Leaders, Positive Behaviour Support Coach and an Autism Spectrum Coach to support staff to implement appropriate and effective programs.
- Continue to develop and extend existing school based professional learning opportunities relevant to the school and the needs of students enrolling at the school.

Welcoming diversity and involvement of parents and the community

1. Continue to provide professional support to neighbourhood schools and schools where JSA students are integrated or have dual enrolment to support their placement and transitions.
2. Through the Centres of Excellence Program, provide outreach support to regional schools. This may include support to:
 - a. assess-the needs of students with Autism,
 - b. develop and provide recommendation for appropriate strategies to increase participation in the school,
 - c. develop and provide recommendation for specific programs that cater for their needs and /or
 - d. create an autism friendly environment which would support and be inclusive of all students.
3. Offer family and broader community engagement and development opportunities through the Community Learning Hub sessions.
4. Provide opportunity for termly student support group meetings (SSGs)
5. Organise and provide interpreting services for families and community members of a culturally and linguistically diverse background.

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website (or insert other online parent/carer/student communication method)
- Included in staff induction processes and staff training.
- Included in staff handbook/manual.
- Discussed at annual staff briefings/meetings.
- Discussed at student forums.
- Included in transition and enrolment packs.
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions.
- Reminders in our school newsletter
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

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Related policies AND RESOURCES

- *Student Wellbeing and Engagement 2024* policy:
<https://sharepoint.jacanaschoolforautism.vic.edu.au/Jacana/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2FJacana%2FShared%20Documents%2FAll%20ISA%20Policies%2FOther%20Policies&FolderCTID=0x0120005294DD32530B1848A099065DFD1E607E&View=%7BAAF4BDCB%2DD60F%2D4EF1%2D836F%2DD15CCB9B22BA%7D>
- Jacana School for Autism (2016). Vision and Values Retrieved 14th August 2016, from http://www.jacanaschoolforautism.vic.edu.au/?page_id=812
- State of Victoria (Department of Education and Training) (1998). Program for Students with Disabilities - operational guidelines for schools 2017. Retrieved 14th August 2016. from www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/diversity/Pages/handbook.aspx
- State of Victoria (Department of Education and Training) (2016). Inclusive education for all students with disabilities and additional needs from <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/departement/PSD-Review-Response.pdf>.
- State of Victoria (Department of Education and Training) (2016). Legal Obligations. Retrieved on 5 September 2016 from <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/legalobligations.aspx>

For staff, please see the Department's [Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination Policy](#), [Sexual Harassment Policy](#) and [Workplace Bullying Policy](#) which apply to all staff working at our school.

Other relevant Department policies and resources on the Department's Policy and Advisory Library are:

- [Equal Opportunity and Human Rights - Students](#)
- [Students with Disability](#)
- [Koorie Education](#)
- [Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture](#)
- [Safe Schools](#)
- [Supports and Services](#)
- [Program for Students with Disabilities](#)

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's 2-year policy review cycle.

Policy last reviewed:	Revised 5 th June, 2024
Consultation:	School Council: 13th June, 2024
Approved by	Principal
Next schedule review date:	Term 2, 2026

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