



## POLICY: SUPPORTING DIVERSE LEARNERS

### Overview

- Coburg High School is committed to being a school where all members of the school community are valued and supported to fully participate, learn, develop and succeed within an inclusive school culture.
- Coburg High School places Learning and Wellbeing, equally, at the centre of all decision making.
- Coburg High School encourages all students of high school age to attend their local school.

### Location

All Coburg High School policies are located under the 'community tab' on Compass, sub-section 'School Documentation' and then 'Policy Documents'.

### Language Opportunities



If you require this document to be translated into another language, please contact:

[info@coburg.vic.edu.au](mailto:info@coburg.vic.edu.au)

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## Rationale/Purpose

An equitable and inclusive education at Coburg High School means that all members of our school community, including those with disabilities, additional needs, and intersecting identities are valued and supported to fully participate, learn, develop, achieve and thrive in school life. Coburg High School recognises that diverse learners provide a diversity of perspectives and that they enrich society.

Coburg High School commits to maintaining a learning environment of high expectations and positive behaviours for all students. A safe learning environment provides all students with an equal opportunity for learning success. CHS recognises that some students experience the world differently than many others and therefore may require adjustments to the provision of work and to their learning conditions in order to reduce barriers for educational and post-school success. Coburg High School understands that inclusive education is not only about ensuring quality education while learners are at school - that it is also a prerequisite for social inclusion in further and higher education, employment, and life in the community.

Coburg High School commits to the SHARE principles for inclusive education

<b>S</b>	<b>Student Centred</b>	Inclusive education involves students, in collaboration with their peers and/or carers, in decision-making processes as respected partners in education.
<b>H</b>	<b>Human Rights focused</b>	Inclusive education is supported by and is the realisation of a human rights based approach to education. International human rights principles and Victoria's Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 provide a framework for every Victorian to be treated with dignity and respect and to enjoy their human rights without discrimination.
<b>A</b>	<b>Acknowledges strengths</b>	Inclusive education recognises that each child and young person is unique. It focuses on a strengths-based, personalised approach to education that celebrates and welcomes difference to maximize learning, engagement and wellbeing outcomes.
<b>R</b>	<b>Respects Legal obligations</b>	Inclusive education enables schools to uphold legal obligations to make reasonable adjustments for all students with disability. Reasonable adjustments assist all students to participate in education on the same basis as their peers without a disability.
<b>E</b>	<b>Evidence Based</b>	Inclusive education uses contemporary evidence-based practices known to be effective in responding to individual student needs and improving student outcomes.

This policy aims to:

- outline Coburg High School's responsibilities to meet the needs of diverse students, parents, teachers and the wider school community.

- improve achievement, participation and wellbeing outcomes for students to be able to achieve their maximum potential
- maximise student engagement, voice and agency in their learning.
- build a collaborative culture and partnerships between families, community partners and Coburg High School
- recognise that historically inequities have existed in education for diverse learners, and in turn, rise to the challenge of maintaining Coburg High School as a welcoming and safe community that fosters the belief that every child can learn given the right supports

## Policy Scope

This policy applies to all students and community members at Coburg High School.

Catering to diverse learners in schools looks like:

- Recognition and appreciation that there is a broad spectrum of processing, communication and social styles in society and an awareness and acceptance that not one style fits all provides students with more opportunity to see a place for their unique selves and contributions in a school.
- Consideration of the social, wellbeing and environmental factors that can support or impede learning. This is in line with the social model of disability, exploring what can be done in communities, services and spaces to make for a more inclusive culture.
- Recognition that students with diverse needs differ in terms of support desired or required
- Extending students and not limiting their educational and co curricular opportunities.

Through professional practice, CHS teachers actively practise and refine their ability to deliver quality differentiated teaching practice, whereby they are responsive to the individual needs of all students in their classroom. Many students, including those with additional needs, may not require educational adjustments beyond those that are reasonably expected as part of quality teaching or school practices. When adjustments are required to support those with physical, cognitive, sensory and/or social-emotional needs beyond what can be accommodated as part of differentiated teaching practice, they are rated supplementary, substantial or extensive adjustments, depending on the frequency with which they must be delivered, and must be ‘reasonable’.

Adjustments may involve a combination of:

- addressing barriers, including modifications, to ensure access to buildings, facilities, services, and crowded environments i.e locker areas
- modifying, simplifying, detailing or reframing instructions, programs, curriculum delivery and assessment strategies
- additional in-class teacher support for students with increased executive functioning or organisational needs
- providing ongoing consultancy support or professional learning and training for staff
- use of specialised technology, computer software or equipment
- provision of study notes or research materials in different formats
- services such as sign language interpreters, visiting school teams or specialist support staff
- additional personnel such as tutors or aides for personal care or mobility assistance.
- access to tools and/ opportunities which help a student to self-regulate such as sensory/stress tools and breaks

The Department of Education defines ‘reasonable school adjustments’ as “measures or actions taken to help a child with disability take part in education courses and programs, on the same basis as a child without disability.” Reasonable adjustments must balance the interests of everyone affected, including the student, education provider, staff and other students.

To determine what is reasonable, the education provider will consider:

- the student's learning and support needs, potential barriers and additional needs and what effect the adjustment will have on the students' participation, learning outcomes and independence
- how the adjustment will affect other students and staff. The Department of Education recognises that some students with disability should be treated with priority, including students in out of home care, First Nations students, those from families that have English as an additional language, and those who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- what evidence exists to support the adjustment, including assessment and expertise of professionals within the school, including teachers, year level leaders and wellbeing staff, and professionals external to the school, such as speech therapists, occupational therapists, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, paediatricians
- the costs and benefits of making the adjustment or the due consideration of not making the adjustments

It is not unlawful if an education provider cannot make an adjustment if it would cause unjustifiable hardship on the provider. Unjustifiable hardship is based on an assessment of what is fair and reasonable in the circumstances. Examples of unjustifiable hardships might include if there is:

- a very high cost of providing an adjustment
- risk to the safety of others if the adjustment is provided

If an education provider claims unjustifiable hardship, they need to provide information and an explanation to the student and guardians on how the adjustment would cause them unjustifiable hardship. It is fair and reasonable that:

- this information be provided in a timely manner
- this information be delivered in language appropriate to a student
- the school provide information about alternative means through which they can be supported with their education
- the student be given the opportunity to discuss claims of unjustifiable hardship with relevant CHS staff, as well as a chosen support person (for example a parent/guardian, wellbeing staff member, treating professional)

## Implementation

CHS acknowledges that all members of our school community have a role in ensuring that students are supported to achieve learning outcomes, including those with diverse learning needs.

### Specific Roles and Responsibilities

#### **CHS Staff: CHS Principal Team**

- Embed inclusion and diverse learning expertise in strategic planning and recruitment practices of the school
- Embed evidence-based inclusive education and human rights obligations into school policies and plans
- Oversee staff professional development, including that which relates to inclusive practices
- Be involved when required in the system for processing adjustment requests, particularly regarding unjustifiable hardship claims.

#### **CHS Staff: Leading Teacher of Inclusion**

- Advocate for students with diverse learning needs and work with school staff to implement strategies for supporting the education of these students employing Universal Design Principles to ensure accessibility
- Embed evidence-based inclusive education practices into school strategic planning
- Curate inclusion professional learning resources
- Oversight of Individual Education Plans for students identified for PSD funding (2024) and Tier 2 & 3 levels of Disability Inclusion (2025-2026)
- Oversee a system for processing adjustment requests, referencing the SHARE principles and amplifying student voice.

- As a member of the school's Leadership team, this individual also works collaboratively with others in the school's Leadership team to collectively contribute to the school's success, ensuring a positive and thriving learning environment for all students and staff.

#### **CHS Staff: Student Support team**

- Facilitate student and family access to relevant professionals both within the school and via community partners
- Communicate and reinforce to teaching staff implementation of supports
- Ensure the implementation of the Diverse Learners Policy and accompanying processes
- Work with the Leading Teacher of Inclusion to identify students with diverse learning needs who may benefit from testing or increased support
- Update Compass/communication from families and professionals on student learning needs
- Facilitate Student Support Group meetings

#### **CHS Staff: Teachers**

- Commitment to professional learning about supporting diverse learners, and drawing upon contemporary neuro-affirming and evidence-based practices known to be effective in responding to individual student needs and improving student outcomes
- Identify students in class, including those without formal diagnoses, who would benefit from increased support and respectfully engage to make reasonable adjustments within the class to assist students to increase their participation and maximise their learning outcomes
- Use a strengths-based, student-centred and trauma-informed approach to education that celebrates and welcomes difference to maximise learning, engagement and wellbeing outcomes
- Commitment to reading Student Profiles/Student Snapshots and learning goals to help provide a deeper understanding of individual student needs

#### **Students**

- Be at the centre of the decision-making process as respected partners in education. This can include:
  - providing feedback about support; what has worked well and what could be improved/what would be helpful
  - aiming to keep teachers, Student Support and Student Wellbeing informed of needs where relevant, updating information as appropriate. Students may also seek less direct conversations via the Student Voice Leaders, Student Support and Wellbeing teams, or a traditional advocate (for example, a parent or guardian)
- Uphold school values during discussions with staff around support needs: aiming to be respectful and understanding of different perspectives

#### **Families and Carers**

- Ongoing encouragement of students to take an active role in the decision making process to ensure a student-centred approach to inclusive education
- Work collaboratively and respectfully with the student and the school to help improve student achievement, participation and wellbeing outcomes
- Update the school with key information relevant to their child's learning
- Build partnerships between the school and treating professionals by facilitating direct communication
- Recognise that teaching is a complex and demanding role but that overwhelmingly teachers wish to provide the best possible education and support for all of their students

#### **Medical/ Therapeutic Professionals and supporting organisations**

Coburg High School recognises the importance of collaborating with medical/therapeutic professionals and supporting organisations to ensure the wellbeing of our students. We value their expertise and insights in promoting a healthy and supportive educational environment. We also recognise the challenges involved in accessing medical and therapeutic

professionals for many students. While we are committed to listening to and considering recommendations provided by these stakeholders, we reserve the right to exercise discretion and make decisions that align with our school's resources, capabilities, and the unique needs of our students.

Coburg High School will listen to and evaluate recommendations. and:

- Give due consideration to recommendations provided by medical/therapeutic professionals and supporting organisations, recognising their valuable insights specific to their expertise.
- Evaluate the feasibility, practicality, and potential impact of the recommendations on the student's education, and within the context of the school's resources, policies, and student population.
- Assess the compatibility of recommendations with existing school policies, curriculum, available resources, and legal obligations.
- Communicate decisions and reasons for accepting or deviating from recommendations in a respectful and constructive manner.

### **All members of the CHS community**

- Apply and uphold the school values of Community, Curiosity, Integrity and Excellence
- Commit to an inclusive educational environment where individuals are respected and valued, regardless of their personal attributes, and discrimination is not tolerated.
- Value and safeguard the privacy of individuals and comply with Victorian privacy laws when privy to a child's personal and health information.
- Ensure a child's personal and health information that is collected is used specifically to support the child's social and emotional wellbeing or health and fulfil legal obligations

### **Implementation Roadmap**

As a school in the Hume Merri-bek area, CHS is scheduled to receive funding via the Schools Mental Health Fund and Menu, and Disability Inclusion rollout, for 2024 and 2025. This allows us access to additional resources to implement the policy across 2024 - 2026.

CHS has hired a Leading Teacher of Inclusion whose portfolio will focus on four key priorities across a three year period:

- Staff training and professional development in neuro-affirming practices and supports
- Preparing documentation and systems to transition CHS to the DI model of inclusive education, including broader use of Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
- School culture improvements, including policy review, mentoring opportunities and increased visibility and pride of learner diversity
- Development of our approach to adjustments and accommodations, and the communication chains to support them

### **Further Information and Resources**

- CHS resources
  - CHS Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
  - CHS Attendance Policy
  - CHS VCE Policy
  - CHS Assessment and Reporting Policy
- DET resources
  - [Program for Students with Disabilities Guidelines](#)
  - [Disability Inclusion](#)
  - [FISO 2.0](#)

- [Diverse Learners Hub](#)
- [Teaching Resources for Supporting diverse learners](#)
- [Education Support Staff working in Classroom Support Roles](#)
- [Inclusive Education Professional Learning](#)
- [Individual Education Plans](#)
- [Student Support Groups](#)
- [Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability Policy](#)
- Legislation underpinning this policy
  - Equal Opportunity Act 2010
  - Disability Discrimination Act 1992
    - Disability Standards for Education 2005 (noting the [Final Report - 2020 Review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005](#) and the [Inclusive education, employment and housing summary and recommendations that stemmed from the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability](#))
  - Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Other resources
  - [ADHD Foundation](#)
  - [Amaze](#)
  - [I Can Network](#)
  - [Yellow Ladybugs](#)
  - [Be You: Beyond Blue](#) Disability Inclusion Guide

## Evaluation

This policy was last ratified on 13 December 2023 and is scheduled for review in Dec 2026.