

STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact the school office on 9481 0177 or email on merri.creek.ps@education.vic.gov.au

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.

Merri Creek Primary School (MCPS) 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, where student participation is encouraged and valued, 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.

Contents:

1. School profile
2. School values, philosophy and vision
3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies
4. Identifying students in need of support
5. Student rights and responsibilities
6. Student behavioural expectations
7. Engaging with families
8. Evaluation

Policy:

1. School profile

Merri Creek Primary School, situated on the banks of the Merri Creek in Fitzroy North, is an inner urban Melbourne school with an enrolment of 426 students in 2024. We have 19 generalist classes across the school and four specialist learning programs including Music, Visual Art, Library and LOTE (Italian). The vision statement for our school is 'As a school community, we create an environment where students thrive in every way. We

support each other as we discover, learn, think, and question. Respecting ourselves and others, we all contribute to our community and the wider world.' This is what we strive for as a community of learners. We aspire to have every child thrive in all areas of schooling. We want students to be socially capable of building and sustaining relationships, to be emotionally connected, aware and resilient, to be physically active and active participants in their learning and their learning environments. We want students to be active in using the processes of discovery, thinking deeply and questioning as learners. We want students to understand what it means to be respectful of themselves and their own needs but also to recognise that we are unique individuals worthy of the respect of others.

Merri Creek Primary School strives to provide a nurturing and challenging environment that empowers students to reach their personal best, both academically and socially.

2. School values, philosophy and vision

MCPS Statement of Values and School Philosophy is integral to the work that we do and is the foundation of our school community. Students, staff and members of our school community are encouraged to live and demonstrate our core values of C.A.R.E - creativity, acceptance, responsibility and effort at every opportunity.

Our school's vision is to create an environment where students thrive in every way. We support each other as we discover, learn, think and question.

We understand that children learn and thrive when they are happy, healthy and secure. This enables us to help them prepare to face any future challenges.

We want our students to be thinkers and creators who have positive self-esteem and a strong sense of identity. This ensures that they will value and develop respectful relationships. The ultimate goal is for them to become positive contributors to their local community and the wider world.

We work to create a secure and supportive environment where children will learn, grow and contribute. An environment where they are respected for who they are and are not discriminated against for any reason.

We understand the importance of upholding our core values as this will have a lasting impact on future learning. As a school community we will continue to respect one another and ensure that all children feel a sense of belonging. We can achieve this by knowing and valuing them as individuals and making connections with their families.

Our Statement of Values is available on the school website.

3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies

MCPS has developed a range of strategies to promote engagement, an inclusive and safe environment, positive behaviour, and respectful relationships for all students in our school. We recognise the importance of student friendships and peer support in helping children and students feel safe and less isolated. We acknowledge that some students may need extra social, emotional or educational support at school, and that the needs of students will change over time as they grow and learn.

A summary of the universal (whole of school), targeted (year group specific) and individual engagement strategies used by our school is included below:

Universal

- high and consistent expectations of all staff, students and parents and carers
- prioritise positive relationships between staff and students, recognising the fundamental role this plays in building and sustaining student wellbeing
- creating a culture that is inclusive, engaging and supportive and that embraces and celebrates diversity and empowers all students to participate and feel valued
- welcoming all parents/carers and being responsive to them as partners in learning
- analysing and being responsive to a range of school data such as attendance, surveys, student management data and school level assessment data
- teachers at MCPS use our instructional framework to ensure an explicit, common and shared model of instruction to ensure that evidenced-based, high yield teaching practices are incorporated into all lessons
- teachers at MCPS adopt a range of teaching and assessment approaches to effectively respond to the strengths and needs of our students. These approaches follow the standards set by the Victorian Institute of Teaching
- our school's Statement of Values are incorporated into our curriculum and promoted to students, staff and parents/carers so that they are shared and celebrated as the foundation of our school community
- carefully planned transition programs to support students moving into different stages of their schooling
- positive behaviour and student achievement is acknowledged in the classroom, in school assemblies and communication to parents
- monitor student attendance and implement attendance improvement strategies at a whole-school, cohort and individual level
- students have the opportunity to contribute to and provide feedback on decisions about school operations through class meetings, surveys and other forums. Students are also encouraged to speak with any of the teaching team whenever they have any questions or concerns.
- create opportunities for cross—age connections amongst students through the buddy system

- all students are welcome to self-refer to the Student Wellbeing Coordinator (Assistant Principal), Team Leader and Principal if they would like to discuss a particular issue or feel as though they may need support of any kind. We are proud to have an ‘open door’ policy where students and staff are partners in learning
- we engage in school wide positive behaviour support with our staff and students, which includes programs such as:
 - Resilience Rights and Respectful Relationships
 - SEL(Social Emotional Learning Program)
 - Mindfulness practice through programs such as Cosmic Yoga/Go Noodle and Smiling Minds
 - Start Up (Term 1), Rev Up (Term 2), Keep it Up! (Term 3), Move Up! (Term 4)-whole school programs
- programs, incursions and excursions developed to address issue specific needs or behaviour
- measures are in place to empower our school community to identify, report and address inappropriate and harmful behaviours such as racism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination or harassment.

Targeted

- each classroom teacher and team leader, monitor the health and wellbeing of students in their year, and act as a point of contact for students who may need additional support
- wellbeing and health staff will undertake health promotion and social skills development in response to needs identified by student wellbeing data, classroom teachers or other school staff each year
- Koorie students are supported to engage fully in their education, in a positive learning environment that understands and appreciates the strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture – refer to our Action Plan for Aboriginal Learning Wellbeing and Safety for further information
- our English as a second language students are supported through our EAL program, and all cultural and linguistically diverse students are supported to feel safe and included in our school.
- *we provide a positive and respectful learning environment for our students who identify as LGBTIQ+ and follow the Department’s policy on [LGBTIQ Student Support](#)*
- *all students in Out of Home Care are supported in accordance with the Department’s policy on [Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care](#) including being appointed a Learning Mentor, having an Individual Learning Plan and a Student Support Group (SSG) and being referred to Student Support Services for an Educational Needs Assessment*
- *students with a disability are supported to be able to engage fully in their learning and school activities in accordance with the Department’s policy on [Students with Disability](#), such as through reasonable adjustments to support access to learning programs, consultation with families and where required, student support groups and individual education plans*
- wellbeing and health staff will undertake health promotion and social skills development in response to needs identified by student wellbeing data, classroom teachers or other school staff each year
- *staff will apply a trauma-informed approach to working with students who have experienced trauma*

Individual

MCPS implements a range of strategies that support and promote individual engagement. These can include:

- building constructive relationships with students at risk or students who are vulnerable due to complex individual circumstances
- meeting with student and their parent/carer to talk about how best to help the student engage with school
- developing an Individual Education Plan and/or a Behaviour and Safety Support Plans
- considering if any environmental changes need to be made, for example changing the classroom set up
- referring the student to:
 - school-based wellbeing supports
 - Student Support Services
 - Appropriate external supports such as council based youth and family services, other allied health professionals, headspace, child and adolescent mental health services or Child First

Where necessary the school will support the student’s family to engage by:

- being responsive and sensitive to changes in the student’s circumstances and health and wellbeing
- collaborating, where appropriate and with the support of the student and their family/carers, with any external allied health professionals, services or agencies that are supporting the student
- *monitoring individual student attendance and developing an Attendance Improvement Plans in collaboration with the student and their family*
- *engaging with our regional Koorie Engagement Support Officers*

- *running regular Student Support Group meetings for all students:*
 - *with a disability*
 - *in Out of Home Care*
 - *with other complex needs that require ongoing support and monitoring.*

4. Identifying students in need of support

MCPS is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. The Wellbeing Committee plays a significant role in developing and implementing strategies help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. MCPS will utilise the following information and tools to identify students in need of extra emotional, social or educational support:

- *personal, health and learning information gathered upon enrolment and while the student is enrolled*
- *attendance records*
- *academic performance*
- *observations by school staff such as changes in engagement, behaviour, self-care, social connectedness and motivation*
- *attendance data*
- *engagement with families*
- *self-referrals or referrals from peers*

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, and follow our school's values. MCPS has two school rights - the right to learn and the right to feel safe. Our school's Statement of Values highlights the rights and responsibilities of members of our community.

Students have the right to:

- participate fully in their education
- feel safe, secure and happy at school
- learn in an environment free from bullying, harassment, violence, racism, discrimination or intimidation
- express their ideas, feelings and concerns.

Students have the responsibility to:

- participate fully in their educational program
- display positive behaviours that demonstrate respect for themselves, their peers, their teachers and members of the school community
- respect the right of others to learn.

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

6. Student behavioural expectations

Behavioural expectations of students are grounded in our school's Statement of Values/Student code of conduct.

Violence, bullying, and other offensive and harmful behaviours such as racism, harassment and discrimination will not be tolerated and will be managed in accordance with Merri Creek Primary School policy. Bullying will be managed in accordance with our Bullying Prevention Policy.

When a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our school community, Merri Creek Primary School will institute a staged response, consistent with the Department's policies on behaviour, discipline and student wellbeing and engagement. Where appropriate, parents will be informed about the inappropriate behaviour and the disciplinary action taken by teachers and other school staff.

Our school considers, explores and implements positive and non-punitive interventions to support student behaviour before considering disciplinary measures such as detention, withdrawal of privileges or withdrawal from class.

Disciplinary measures may be used as part of a staged response to inappropriate behaviour in combination with other engagement and support strategies to ensure that factors that may have contributed to the student's behaviour are identified and addressed. Disciplinary measures at our school will be applied fairly and consistently. Students will always be provided with an opportunity to be heard.

Disciplinary measures that may be applied include:

- warning a student that their behaviour is inappropriate
- teacher controlled consequences such as moving a student in a classroom or other reasonable and proportionate responses to misbehaviour
- withdrawal of privileges
- referral to the Team Leader/Student Wellbeing Coordinator
- restorative practices
- behaviour support and intervention meetings

Suspension, expulsion and restrictive interventions are measures of last resort and may only be used in situations consistent with Department policy, available at:

- Student Engagement Policy: <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-engagement/policy>
- Student Behaviour Advice: <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/behaviour-students/policy>
- Suspension Policy: <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/suspensions/policy>
- Expulsion Policy: <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/expulsions/policy>

In line with Ministerial Order 1125, no student aged 8 or younger will be expelled without the approval of the Secretary of the Department of Education and Training.

The Principal is responsible for ensuring all suspensions and expulsions are recorded on CASES21.

Corporal punishment is prohibited by law and will not be used in any circumstance at our school.

7. Engaging with families

MCPS values the input of parents and carers, and we will strive to support families to engage in their child's learning and build their capacity as active learners. We aim to be partners in learning with parents and carers in our school community.

We work hard to create successful partnerships with parents and carers by:

- ensuring that all parents have access to our school policies and procedures, available on our school website
- maintaining an open, respectful line of communication between parents and staff, supported by our Communicating with School Staff policy.
- providing parent volunteer opportunities so that families can contribute to school activities
- involving families in school decision making
- coordinating resources and services from the community for families
- including families in Student Support Groups and developing individual plans for students.

8. Evaluation

MCPS will collect data each year to understand the frequency and types of wellbeing 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 data
- incidents data
- school reports
- parent survey
- case management
- CASES21, (Computerised Administrative Systems Environment in Schools) including attendance and absence data
- Student Online Case System (SOCS) is a system for recording, managing and reporting cases for student support services.

MCPS will also regularly monitor available data dashboards to ensure any wellbeing or engagement issues are acted upon in a timely manner and any intervention occurs as soon as possible.

Communication:

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

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in staff handbook
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

Our school will also ensure it follows the mandatory parent/carer notification requirements with respect to suspensions and expulsions outlined in the Department's policies at:

- [Suspension process](#)
- [Expulsions - Decision](#)

Further Information and Resources:

The following Department of Education and Training policies are relevant to this Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy:

- [Attendance](#)
- [Student Engagement](#)
- [Child Safe Standards](#)
- [Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care](#)
- [Students with Disability](#)
- [LGBTIQ Student Support](#)
- [Behaviour - Students](#)
- [Suspensions](#)
- [Expulsions](#)
- [Restraint and Seclusion](#)

The following school policies are also relevant to this Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and available on the school website:

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Statement of Values and School Philosophy.

Review Cycle:

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| Policy last reviewed | August 2024 |
| Consultation | School Council 14th August 2024 Community |
| Approved by | School Council on 14th August 2024 |
| Next scheduled review date | August 2026 |

This policy will be reviewed in:

April 2026