STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Merriang School on 9404 2839.

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.

Merriang 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, 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

Merriang Special Developmental School is a dual campus, government specialist school located in the City of Whittlesea. The Later Years Campus and main administration offices are located in Duncan Rd Lalor and is attended by secondary aged students, whilst primary aged students attend the Early Years Campus located in South Morang. There is a distance of 10.1 driving kilometres between the campuses.

Our school is culturally diverse with 27% of our students having a language background other than English. The school continues to promote a positive learning environment through SWPBS and our behaviour purpose statement reflects this commitment 'Merriang promotes effective, social and purposeful learning by creating a safe and positive school environment. Through predictable and consistent school wide behavioural learning expectations we will empower, engage and support all members of the school community."

School values, philosophy and vision

The school's vision is ' To lead special education through exemplary and innovative practice'. Our school values of Safety, Respect and Active Learning align to the school's expected behaviours of We Are Safe, We Are Respectful and We Are Learners.

2. Wellbeing and engagement strategies

Merriang School implements a School Wide Positive Behaviour Framework that offers a three-tiered intervention approach. It is a whole school approach focussing on maintaining positive and engaging environments. Merriang 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.

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, Attitudes to School Survey, parent survey data, student management data and school level assessment data
• deliver a broad curriculum that is tailored to their interests, strengths and aspirations
• teachers at Merriang implement SWPBS and explicitly teach expected behaviours to encourage appropriate behaviours
• teachers at Merriang School adopt a broad range of teaching and assessment approaches to effectively respond to the diverse learning styles, strengths and needs of our students and follow the standards set by the Victorian Institute of Teaching
• our school's Statement of Values and School Philosophy are incorporated into our curriculum and promoted to students, staff and parents 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, and formally in school assemblies and communication to parents
• monitor student attendance and implement attendance improvement strategies at a whole school, cohort and individual level
• we engage in school wide positive behaviour support with our staff and students, which includes programs such as:
o Respectful Relationships
o Bullying Prevention
o Safe Schools
• programs, incursions and excursions developed to address issue specific needs or behaviour (i.e behaviour support plans, medical)

Targeted
• 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
• all students 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 student support groups and individual education plans
• students enrolled under the Department's international student program are supported in accordance with our legal obligations and Department policy and guidelines at: International Student Program
• Staff will explicitly teach our expected behaviours to encourage positive behaviour
• The school is committed to implementing SWPBS using a multi- tiered system of supports for all students
• A school wide plan is developed to teach behavioural expectations to all students by all staff
• Staff and students use positive language to encourage expected behaviours
• Staff monitor student engagement and behaviour using school data

Individual
Merriang School 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 Learning Plan and/or a Behaviour Support Plan
• considering if any environmental changes need to be made, for example changing the classroom set up
• referring the student to:
o school-based wellbeing supports (i.e SWPBS Tier 2 team)
o Student Support Services
o Appropriate external supports such as ChildFirst 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, with any external allied health professionals, services or agencies that are supporting the student

4. Identifying students in need of support

Merriang School is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. The Tier 2 team and Leadership play a significant role in developing and implementing strategies to help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. Merriang School 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, detention and suspension data
• engagement with families
• Behaviour data records identifying a student for additional SWPBS Tier 2 interventions and supports

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:
• 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. Further information about raising a complaint or concern is available in our Complaints Policy.

3. Identifying students in need of support

Merriang School is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. The student wellbeing team plays a significant role

in developing and implementing strategies help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. Merriang School 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, detention and suspension data
- engagement with families
- self-referrals or referrals from peers
- Student Support Groups and Individual Education Plans

4. 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 and School Philosophy 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. Further information about raising a complaint or concern is available in our Complaints Policy.

5. Student behavioural expectations

The Merriang School behavioural expectations of students are grounded in our school's Statement of Values and School Philosophy/Student Code of Conduct.

Violence, bullying, and other offensive and harmful behaviours such as racism, harassment and discrimination is not tolerated and will be managed in accordance with this 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, Merriang School will institute a staged response, consistent with the department's policies on behaviour, discipline and student wellbeing and engagement. Where appropriate, parents and carers will be informed about the inappropriate behaviour and the disciplinary action taken by teachers and other school staff.

Our school considers, explores and implement 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 year level coordinator
- restorative practices
- detentions
- behaviour support and intervention meetings
- suspension
- expulsion

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

- Suspensions Policy
- Expulsions Policy
- Restraint and Seclusion 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.

The principal of Merriang School 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.

6. Engaging with families

Merriang School values the input of parents and carers, and we 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/carers have access to our school policies and procedures, available on our school website

- maintaining an open, respectful line of communication between parents/carers and staff, supported by our Communicating with School Staff Policy.
- providing parent/carer volunteer opportunities so that families can contribute to school activities
- involving families with homework and other curriculum-related 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.

7. Evaluation

Merriang School collects 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 are assessed on an annual basis include:

- student survey data
- incidents data
- school reports
- parent survey
- case management
- CASES21, including attendance and absence data
- Student Online Case System (SOCS)

Merriang School also regularly monitors 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 is communicated to our school community in the following:

- Available publicly on our school's
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Included in student diaries so that it is easily accessible to parents, carers and students
- Included as annual reference in school newsletter
- Made available in hard copy 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 policies and resources are relevant to this Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy:

- Attendance
- Behaviour - Students

- Child Safe Standards
- Expulsions
- Koorie Education
- LGBTIQA+ Student Support
- Restraint and Seclusion
- Student Engagement
- Students with Disability
- Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care
- Suspensions

The following school policies are also relevant to this Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy:

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

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	14.8.26
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	14.8.30