
MERRI-BEK PRIMARY SCHOOL – NO 2837

STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact the front office on (03) 9386 2510.

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-bek Primary 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.

CONTENTS

1. School profile
2. School values, philosophy and vision
3. 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-bek Primary School is situated in Coburg, which is a suburb in the inner urban north of Melbourne. The physical layout of the school is an open plan learning structure on two storeys with four main learning areas accommodating multi-age classes of Foundation, Year 1, Year 2, Year 3/4 and Year 5/6. The teaching and learning areas are open environments that contain a kitchen, library and offices. The school has an

MERRI-BEK PRIMARY SCHOOL – NO 2837

STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

auditorium used for performing arts, assemblies and physical education lessons. The school grounds include an artificial turf playground, an adventure playground, a sandpit area, grass play surfaces and shaded passive areas with vegetable and native plant beds.

Our school has a diverse population with at least 30% of our students coming from a background other than English. We pride ourselves on our diversity and inclusiveness and celebrate throughout the year our many different cultures represented in the school. We do this through special assemblies, lunches and breakfasts celebrating our culturally diverse community.

2. **School values, philosophy and vision**

Merri-bek Primary School's vision is to be a community of inclusive, innovative and inspired learners. Merri-bek Primary School's mission is to:

- Create a culture of shared goals, trust and high expectations for all.
- Embrace an environment that is open, safe and welcoming.
- Promote and develop student voice and agency to drive action.
- Provide an engaging and challenging curriculum, which promotes exploration, risk-taking and creativity.

3. **Engagement strategies**

Merri-bek Primary School has developed a range of strategies to promote engagement, positive behaviour and respectful relationships for all students in our school. 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. By the time our students graduate from Merri-bek Primary School we envisage they will be:

Positive Learners

- they are confident to learn new things
- they collaborate and communicate
- they think critically and creatively

Socially Capable

- they are respectful and honest
- they have a strong sense of self
- they have a social conscience

Academic

- they value all curriculum areas
- they are flexible technology users
- they are literate and numerate

Healthy

- they are physically active

MERRI-BEK PRIMARY SCHOOL – NO 2837

STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

- they have the skills to be resilient
- they can make healthy decisions and build positive relationships

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
- 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
- teachers at Merri-bek Primary School use a Professional Learning Communities 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 Merri-bek Primary 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 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
- 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 to their home group teacher, the Principal and Assistant Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns
- create opportunities for cross—age connections amongst students through school plays, athletics, music programs and cultural celebrations

All students are welcome to self-refer to the Student Wellbeing Coordinator/ Assistant Principal 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 and we engage in school wide positive behaviour support with our staff and students, which includes programs such as:

- Respectful Relationships
- opportunities for student inclusion (i.e. sports teams, clubs, recess and lunchtime activities)
- buddy programs

MERRI-BEK PRIMARY SCHOOL – NO 2837

STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Targeted

- each year group has a Team Leader responsible for their year, who monitors the health and wellbeing of students in their year, and acts as a point of contact for students who may need additional support
- connect all Koorie students with a Koorie Engagement Support Officer (if applicable)
- all students in Out of Home Care will be appointed a Learning Mentor, have an Individual Education Plan and will be referred to Student Support Services for an Educational Needs Assessment
- staff will apply a trauma-informed approach to working with students who have experienced trauma – refer to <https://www.echotraining.org/> for information about trauma informed classrooms.

Individual

- Student Support Groups, see: <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/>
- Individual Education Plan and Behaviour Support Plan
- Program for Students with Disabilities
- referral to Student Welfare Coordinator and Student Support Services
- referral to ChildFirst, Headspace
- Lookout

Merri-bek Primary 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 Education 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:
 - school-based wellbeing supports
 - Student Support Services
- 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
- monitoring individual student attendance and developing an Attendance Improvement Plans in collaboration with the student and their family
- running regular Student Support Group meetings for all students:
 - with a disability

MERRI-BEK PRIMARY SCHOOL – NO 2837

STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

- in Out of Home Care
- and with other complex needs that require ongoing support and monitoring.

4. Identifying students in need of support

Merri-bek Primary School is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. The Student Wellbeing team (Principal class and Team Leaders) plays a significant role in developing and implementing strategies and help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing.

Merri-bek Primary 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
- engagement with families
- self-referrals or referrals from peers
- SSSO referral

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, 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.

MERRI-BEK PRIMARY SCHOOL – NO 2837

STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

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, staff and families are grounded in our school's Statement of Values. Student bullying behaviour will be responded to consistently with Merri-bek Primary School's Bullying Prevention policy.

When a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our school community, Merri-bek Primary School will institute a staged response, consistent with the Department's Student Engagement and Inclusion Guidelines. Where appropriate, parents will be informed about the inappropriate behaviour and the disciplinary action taken by teachers and other school staff.

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 (during school hours)
- behaviour reviews
- suspension
- expulsion

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

- <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/suspensions/policy>
- <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/expulsions/policy>
- <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/restraint-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 and Training.

MERRI-BEK PRIMARY SCHOOL – NO 2837

STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT

POLICY

The Principal of Merri-bek Primary School is responsible for ensuring all suspensions and expulsions are recorded on CASES21.

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

7. Engaging with families

Merri-bek Primary School 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 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 education plans for students where required.

8. Evaluation

Merri-bek Primary School 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
- Chronicle entries in COMPASS
- CASES21

COMMUNICATION

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

- Available publicly on our school's website

MERRI-BEK PRIMARY SCHOOL – NO 2837

STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

- Included in staff induction processes
- 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

- [Merri-bek Primary school policies](#)
- [Department’s Policy Advisory Library](#)

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	March 2022
Consultation	March 2022 – Principal, Staff, School Council
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	March 2024