**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.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all students and members of our school community understand:

1. our commitment to providing a safe and supportive learning environment for students
2. expectations for positive student behaviour
3. support available to students and families
4. our school’s policies and procedures for responding to inappropriate student behaviour.

Mount Dandenong 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, 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, mission and vision
3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies
4. Identifying students in need of support
5. Student rights and responsibilities
6. Student behavioural expectations and management
7. Engaging with families
8. Evaluation

**Policy**

1. **School profile**

Mount Dandenong Primary School was established in 1897 and is located at the top of the mountain in the Dandenong Ranges, within Wurrudjeri Country. It is approximately 50 kilometres east of Melbourne's CBD. Mount Dandenong Primary School’s vision is to empower students to discover a love for learning and achieve their personal best. Our students are creative, curious and critical thinkers who are open to new ideas.

Mount Dandenong Primary School values our unique environment and close community. It is a place for creative opportunities and academic excellence, nurturing respect, happiness and independence. We support children’s learning by emphasising the importance of independent thinking and supporting children’s resilience to challenge and change. We value the creative arts and creative thinking. We celebrate our connection to country and the environment. We acknowledge the context of community at our school, where the local people and environment play a vital role in sustaining future generations. We value and nurture the individuality of each child to reach their goals through inquiry and academic rigour. The Mount Dandenong Primary School shared CARE values of Community, Achievement, Respect and Empathy articulate the fundamental attributes required so that learners can become valuable and valued community citizens.

Our students, staff and parents work to cultivate these values and demonstrate them in their interactions with one another as well as in the broader community. In 2023, the school had an enrolment of 157 students with an experienced staff comprising 13.3 equivalent full-time personnel: 1 Principal class, 9.8 Teachers and 2.5 Education Support Staff. In 2023, Mount Dandenong Primary School had specialist programs in Art, Music, Japanese and Physical Education as well as intervention programs for students achieving below the expected level. Students enjoy the use of modern learning facilities including well-equipped classrooms, a well-stocked library, a flexible 'Senior Learning Unit' including common studio space, a multi-purpose room including a permanent stage and audio-visual technologies and dedicated rooms for Visual Arts, Japanese and Music. The Wominjeka Community Garden with its wood-fired pizza oven and organically-grown vegetables complements extensive grounds that include multiple play spaces and gardens where students can explore and experience their natural surroundings. Sporting facilities include an undercover court, 2 basketball courts and a playing field.

1. **School values, mission and vision**

**Vision**

To empower students to discover a love for learning and achieve their personal best.

**Mission**

To provide a high-quality education in an inclusive environment that nurtures students’ talents, creativity and curiosity. We seek to develop the skills and knowledge necessary for students to achieve their personal best and move forward as active and empathetic global citizens. We celebrate our connection to country and the environment. We acknowledge the context of community at our school, where the local people and environment play a vital role in sustaining future generations.

**Values**

Mount Dandenong Primary School has in place a set of core values that underpin the vision of the school.

Mount Dandenong Primary School is a caring school and we have defined four key values using the acronymn **'CARE'.**

**Community:** *We work together and support each other*

We value actions that are considerate of others. We use our voice to make suggestions and improvements for the greater good, making Mount Dandenong and our neighbourhood a better and happier place for all people to work and live.

**Achievement:***We persist and try our best*

We have high expectations of ourselves and each other. We have a growth mindset and are resilient and persistent when faced with challenges. We believe we can learn, set personal goals and always try our best. We recognise and celebrate growth in all areas of achievement and for all students.

**Respect:***We respect each other and our environment*

Respect involves taking responsibility for our own actions and recognising that everyone has rights and responsibilities. Respect is speaking to and interacting with others in a courteous manner. It is about being honest, reliable and trustworthy. Respect means we share knowledge and work together for the benefit of the school and community.

**Empathy**: *We treat others with care and compassion*

Empathy means trying to understand other people's views or feelings, accepting difference, including others and being supportive and caring through actions that improve our relationships.

1. **Wellbeing and engagement strategies**

Mount Dandenong Primary School 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, including First Nations perspectives, 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
* teachers at Mount Dandenong Primary School use a co-constructed 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 Mount Dandenong 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 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
* Students have the opportunity to contribute to and provide feedback on decisions about school operations through the Student Representative Council and other forums including year group and class meetings. Students are also encouraged to speak with their teachers and Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns.
* All students are welcome to self-refer to their teacher, the Student Wellbeing Coordinator, 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:
  + Respectful Relationships
* programs, incursions and excursions developed to address issue specific needs or behaviour (i.e. social skills programs)
* opportunities for student inclusion (i.e. sports teams, clubs, recess and lunchtime activities)
* buddy program
* 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

* Teachers and the Wellbeing Coordinator, who monitor the health and wellbeing of students in their year, act as a point of contact for students who may need additional support
* Koorie and other First Nations students, lead by our Marrung Education Coordinator, 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
* 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 support learning and wellbeing outcomes of students from refugee background through our community engagement and EAL programs
* 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](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/lgbtiq-student-support/policy)
* All students in Out of Home Care are supported in accordance with the Department’s policy on [Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/supporting-students-out-home-care/policy) including 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](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/students-disability/policy), such as through reasonable adjustments to support access to learning programs, consultation with families and where required, student support groups and individual education plans
* 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

Individual

Mount Dandenong 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 students 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:
  + 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 Orange Door

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 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*.*

1. **Identifying students in need of support**

Mount Dandenong Primary School is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. The Wellbeing team plays a significant role in developing and implementing strategies to help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. Mount Dandenong 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, detention and suspension data
* Engagement with families
* Self-referrals or referrals from peers

1. **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.

1. **Student behavioural expectations and management**

Behavioural expectations of students are grounded in our school’s Statement of Values and our Student Behaviour Expectations.

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

When a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our school community, Mount Dandenong 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 ourschool 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
* Restorative practices
* Detention, such as loss of recess time
* 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, 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.

The Principal of Mount Dandenong Primary 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.

1. **Engaging with families**

Mount Dandenong 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
* 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 plans for students.

1. **Evaluation**

Mount Dandenong 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
* CASES21, including attendance and absence data
* SOCS

Mount Dandenong Primary School 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 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](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/suspensions/guidance/1-suspension-process)
* [Expulsions - Decision](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/expulsions/guidance/decision)

**Further information and resources**

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

* [Attendance](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/attendance/policy)
* [Student Engagement](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-engagement/policy)
* [Child Safe Standards](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/child-safe-standards/policy)
* [Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/supporting-students-out-home-care/policy)
* [Students with Disability](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/students-disability/policy)
* [LGBTIQ Student Support](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/lgbtiq-student-support/policy)
* [Behaviour - Students](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/behaviour-students/policy)
* [Suspensions](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/suspensions/policy)
* [Expulsions](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/expulsions/policy)
* [Restraint and Seclusion](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/restraint-seclusion/policy)

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

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

## **POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL**

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| Policy last reviewed | November 2023 |
| Consultation | School Council |
| Approved by | Principal |
| Next scheduled review date | November 2025 |