Mt Eliza Primary School
Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy

Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact our office, 03 9787 1385.

Policy review team members: School Council Education Team:Dean Charge, Deb Gardener, Jane Herring, Carolyn Smith, Hayley Gregory, Kim Wheeler and Michelle Polley; Wellbeing & Engagement Priority Team.	This policy was last ratified by the School Council on Monday 22nd May, 2022.

Purpose

For students to be successful learners it is critical that we develop and promote positive school cultures and increase student wellbeing. This policy focuses on the development of prosocial behaviours and emphasises prevention and early intervention rather than punishment as a way to respond to inappropriate behaviour.

At Mt Eliza Primary School (MEPS), our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy sets out the rights, responsibilities and shared expectations of everyone in the school community, including students, parents and staff. It has been developed through a consultative process. The policy is framed within the following Department of Education and Training documents:

- Health and Wellbeing Implementation Guide
- Empowering students and Building School Pride Implementation Guide
- Setting Expectations and Promoting Inclusion Implementation Guide
- Safe and Well in Education Framework; as well as
- Associated legislative requirements

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) available support services for students and families
(d) our school's policies and procedures for responding to inappropriate student behaviour.

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.

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School Profile

Mt Eliza Primary School is located south-east of Melbourne at the northern end of the Mornington Peninsula. The School comprises 2.5 hectares of attractive gardens in a native treed setting. Excellent sporting facilities, including two multi-purpose facilities (the Building Education Revolution 'BER' gym facility plus our original basketball stadium/hall), external courts and turf oval. There are extensive play spaces, adventure playgrounds and passive areas with shade cover.

Mt Eliza Primary School is 150 years old but moved to its present site in 1929 when a one-roomed rural school was moved from Mordialloc as a facility in which to educate an increasing number of students. This building is now known as our 'Old School House' which stands proudly at the front of the school. The building was saved from demolition in 2004 by a group of hard working and passionate members of our school community. In 2009 our BER multipurpose centre was finished. This began our journey into the world of the 'Kitchen Garden', utilising the extensive kitchen facilities and creating garden spaces. Over the years, this program has provided our students with the capability and experience to grow their own foods and the skills and desire to create healthy and delicious meals from fresh seasonal produce. In 2021 we began our partnership with OzHarvest to become a FEAST program school, with our launch into the program occurring in 2022. Our newest building was completed in early 2019 which replaced our oldest wing at the school.

Since its inception, MEPS has been synonymous with a strong sense of community spirit. In partnership with our community, we have developed a culture that reflects our five values: Respect, Responsibility, Resilience, Connectedness and Challenge. These values are the cornerstone of what we do; they support our approach to learning and are key to the way in which we develop respectful relationships across the school.

School values, philosophy and vision

Vision

'A community connected in kindness through relationships, learning and values'.

We believe in a holistic view of education that equips our students with the attributes that they will need to lead purposeful and fulfilling lives, where social and emotional skills are as important as academic and professional skills. In addition to a strong focus on the building blocks of learning, literacy and numeracy, our students learn 'how to learn' and they are guided from their first days of school in the development of communication skills. Our programs deliberately promote and engage students in:

- How to communicate with each other
- Being kind to ourselves and one another
- How to be part of a team
- Understanding that we are all different
- How to support one another in the collective learning journey

Spending a day in our school demonstrates the varied and dynamic life of our learning community; one full of challenge, choice and opportunity, designed to see our students grow, flourish, and discover their abilities and passions in life.

Mission

To improve the quality of student outcomes and teaching practice by:

- Promoting and maintaining healthy and productive relationships
- Developing a balance between explicit teaching and guided inquiry to build the capacity of learners; and
- Creating a culture of collective responsibility.

Values
These are driven and underpinned by our school values:

- Respect

- Responsibility
- Resilience
- Connectedness, and
- Challenge

At MEPS we choose to think and act safely, make wise choices, listen and speak respectfully and are brave enough to learn.

Philosophy

We believe that all children have the capacity to be competent, capable and sophisticated thinkers, with endless ways and opportunities to express themselves.

Our How

Our curriculum is developed, delivered, assessed and reflected through the framework of the Victorian Curriculum. Our rigorous program places emphasis on a balance of explicit instruction in conjunction with guided inquiry and personalised learning approaches.

Driving our educational philosophy are the Department of Education and Training's two strategic priorities which tie together various educational influences within **Learning** *and* **Wellbeing.**
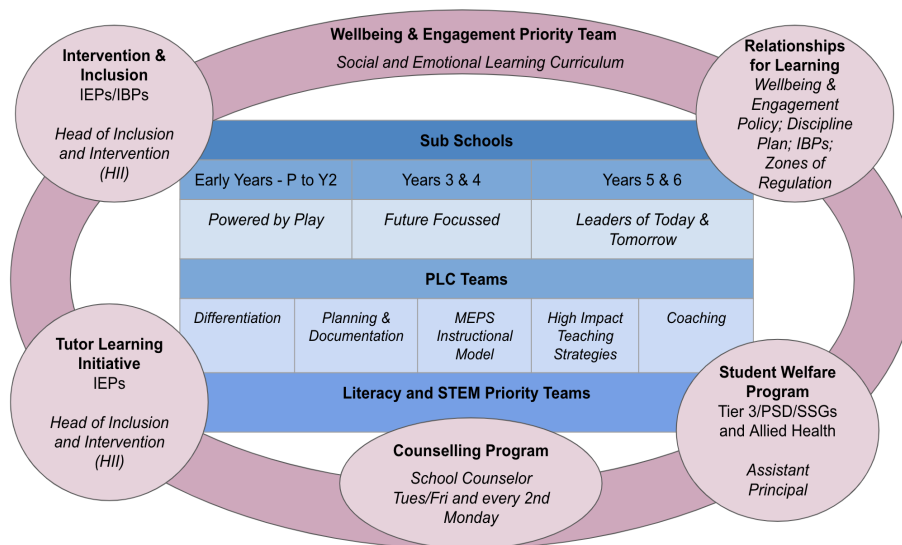
The Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) supports the operationalisation of the four year School Strategic Plan, articulating how the school will implement, monitor and evaluate progress against the School Strategic Plan each year. The development of the AIP and ongoing monitoring of progress, including collection of evidence of impact, is led by the School Improvement Team and informed by school-wide input, discussion and feedback.

MEPS works with external staff to improve teaching and learning. As a school we employ a School Counsellor/Social Worker who supports our students where there may be educational, wellbeing and/or family needs. Social and Emotional Learning is a focus with the school nominated as a Lead school in the RRRR (Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships) program. The school employs support teachers to enhance and challenge student learning in Literacy and Numeracy.

Wellbeing & Engagement Strategies

Whole School Strategies

Mt Eliza Primary School (MEPS) is committed to providing a safe, secure, stimulating and inclusive learning environment for all students. We aim to recognise and cater for all children, regardless of academic, religious, economic or cultural background, and we aim to provide programs which enhance the individual's interests and talents. We recognise the importance of student friendships and peer support in helping children and students feel safe and less isolated .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.

Our MEPS school values form the foundation of our whole school prevention program which consists of the following:

- 'Getting to Know You' program, implemented across the school at the start of Term 1 each year and again when necessary (i.e., beginning of each term/after transitions), is a vital part of setting up a classroom culture of respect, collaboration and positive relationships.
- Provision of a child-centred, developmentally appropriate learning environment that recognises, fosters and promotes the intellectual, social, emotional and physical development of each child.
- Creating a culture that is inclusive, engaging and supportive and that embraces and celebrates diversity and empowers all students to participate and feel valued.
- Understanding that many children have unique wellbeing and learning needs and we are committed to addressing these.
- A behaviour management approach which encourages positive behaviours and outlines clear expectations both in the yard and in the classroom.
- Ensuring that effective Individual Behaviour Plans are put in place when appropriate.
- Specific engagement and alternate programs for children at risk e.g., Drumbeat, lunchtime clubs with the Counselor, POD as a place for reflection and/or quiet play etc.
- Support from the Department of Education and Training's Student Support Services (SSSO) for parents, students and staff.
- A school environment where students are engaged and want to come to school.
- Development of a Student Wellbeing Support Team (SWST) comprising Principal, Assistant Principal, Head of Inclusion and Intervention and School Counsellor. This team provides an element of proactive planning as well as targeted support for teachers, students and/or parents.
- Inclusion and intervention programs available for students who need learning support or those with a disability.
- Extension programs for high ability and gifted students.

The Whole School Prevention strategies listed are aimed at supporting all students. MEPS has developed a range of strategies to promote engagement, positive behaviour and respectful relationships for all students in our school.

- High behavioural and learning expectations of all students, staff and parents/carers in all situations.
- Welcoming all parents/carers and being responsive to them as partners in learning.
- Encouragement for all members of the school community to demonstrate the school's values in their interactions with others.
- Prioritising positive relationships between staff and students, recognising the fundamental role this plays in building and sustaining student wellbeing.
- 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.
- Explicit instruction of social and emotional learning through approaches such as Circle Time, Restorative Practices, Zones of Regulation and Social Thinking.
- Consistent behavioural expectations clearly articulated and observed in all learning environments.
- Ensuring a learning environment where all students are able to participate in a learning program that meets their individual needs, including clear purpose for lessons (Learning Intentions) and 'just right' criteria for success.
- Development and implementation of Individual Education Plans for students who qualify.
- 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.
- Providing opportunities for authentic Student Voice through Circle Time, Student Leadership and House activities. Students have the opportunity to contribute to and provide feedback on decisions about school operations through the Student Representative Council and other student voice forums. Students are also encouraged to speak with their teachers, Assistant Principal and Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns.
- Creating opportunities for cross-age connections amongst students through the Buddy Program and whole school events.
- Developing learning behaviours in all learners (e.g., Listening skills, organisational skills, questioning skills) through direct instruction, modelling and positive feedback.
- Students are welcome to self-refer to teachers, the First Aid officer, 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.
- Programs, incursions and excursions developed to address issue specific behaviour (i.e. mindfulness, cyber safety and relationship programs)

- Monitoring of student attendance and implementation of attendance improvement strategies at a whole-school, cohort and individual level where needed.
- All consequences for inappropriate behaviour are to meet the needs of the student and the context in question.
- 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.

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. In all schools, and across the community, there are individuals who may require additional support or intervention to ensure that they do not impact on the learning, wellbeing and safety of others. For this small percentage of our student population, the school will implement a staged approach to actions and consequences as appropriate.

Targeted/Individual Strategies

The classroom teacher is responsible for the wellbeing of their class and acts as a point of contact for students who may need additional support. Targeted strategies are required for the following:

- 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 and by connecting to the Koorie Engagement Support Officer as needed. Please refer to our Aboriginal Learning, Wellbeing and Safety Action Plan for further information

- Our English as a second language student/s are supported 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
- 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

- 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 undertake professional learning in response to needs identified by student wellbeing data, classroom teachers or other school staff each year. Staff will be supported to apply a trauma-informed approach to working with students who have experienced trauma and/or those impacted by significant circumstances.

Specific student strategies are applied and provided on a case by case basis via:
- Referral to Assistant Principal and Student Support Services.
- Referral to ChildFirst, Headspace and/or other external agencies.
- Referral to Lookout for Out of Home School Students.

Termly Student **Support Group meetings (SSGs)** are established for the following:
- Program for Students with Disabilities (funded students) or Tier 3
- Out of Home Care Students
- Students with serious health/wellbeing issues that require regular monitoring
- Koorie students
- Students who have Visiting Teacher services

Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are recommended for students who require adjustments that cannot be provided through differentiated teaching, enabling them to reach their full potential.
IEPs are required for:

- Funded students
- Koori students
- Out of home care students
- Students who require an SSG due to being vulnerable, including students not achieving their potential or at risk of disengaging, or students with high behaviour issues/anxiety
- Tier 2 students with diagnoses (including dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, ASD, SLD, ADHD etc)
- Students with significant high ability based on multiple data sources ie. NAPLAN, PAT, AGAT, Lexile, F&P etc.
- Students working significantly below the expected level based on multiple data sources ie. NAPLAN, PAT, AGAT, Lexile, F&P etc.

There may be students working above or below expected level who can be catered for through differentiated teaching, which is demonstrated in PLC planners through listed adjustments and strategies to include these students. These students do not require an IEP.

Behaviour Improvement Plans (BIPs) are required for:
- Students who require support strategies to develop their behaviour skills will have a BIP that will be reviewed regularly throughout the year as needed.

Engagement Strategies

MEPS implements a range of strategies that support and promote individual engagement. These include:
- Building constructive relationships with students at risk or students who are vulnerable due to complex individual circumstances.
- Selecting the instructional practices model that best suits the outcome/focus/context.
- Promotion of student voice and agency across the school.
- Meeting with a 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 Improvement Plan.
- Considering if any environmental changes need to be made, for example changing the classroom set up.
- Through the Victorian High Abilities Program (VHAP) we provide opportunities for our high capacity students to extend their capabilities. In addition, expert tutors may be utilised to provide point of need instruction for high ability/gifted students.
- Referring the student to:
    o School-based wellbeing supports
    o Student Support Services
    o Appropriate external supports such as council based youth and family services, other allied health professionals, Headspace, child and adolescent mental health services or ChildFirst
    o Re-engagement programs and external support services.

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 Plan in collaboration with the student and their family.
- Running regular Student Support Group meetings for all students
    - with a disability
    - in Out of Home Care; and
    - with other complex needs that require ongoing support and monitoring

Relationships for Learning

Mt Eliza Primary School takes an integrated approach to relationship development by establishing and strengthening relationships through an integrated approach to our whole school philosophy that includes the 'Rights, Resilience and Respectful Relationships' Program (RRRRs), e-Safety programs, Restorative Practices and Trauma Informed approaches.

At the beginning of Term 1, and reviewed as the year progresses, teachers and students collaboratively discuss classroom behaviours and expectations and decide on collective responsibilities. Every class/year level develops an Essential Agreement to ensure that everyone is responsible for their own behaviour and choices.

To assist students to take responsibility for their actions and choices we use a problem solving approach that is educational and teaches important social skills and emotional competencies through programs such as Restorative Practices, Zones of Regulation and Social Thinking.

Our Relationships for Learning approach supports students in social interactions to develop:
- Self-discipline and self-control
- Self-esteem and self-confidence
- Maturity
- Respect
- Empathy
- Independence
- Responsibility

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Positive mental health is more than the absence of mental illness. Positive mental health is a state of wellbeing where people can meet their learning potential, cope with normal stresses, and are connected to community and their friends.

Why positive mental health and wellbeing is promoted at MEPS

For most people, mental health issues emerge when they are young — half of all mental disorders emerge by the time people are 14 years old and three quarters by 25 years old – the same period when most people are in education.

As well as increasing a person's opportunity and choices in life, promoting positive mental health and wellbeing as a core role in education helps students:
- flourish in their education journey
- build resilience against adversity
- develop protective factors from mental ill-health
- provide them with skills and confidence to self-seek help for early intervention.

Key features of promoting mental health at MEPS

Whole school approaches

A whole school approach involves everyone (schools leaders, teachers, staff and parents) to embed a safe and inclusive learning culture and environments, including:
- providing social and emotional skills programs
- providing timely support for those with additional needs
- involving students and families in decision-making.

Example of Whole School Approach through the 'Rights, Resilience and Respectful Relationships' Program (RRRRs)

The Respectful Relationships whole-school approach recognises that schools are a workplace, a community hub and a place of learning. Everyone involved in our school community deserves to be respected, valued and treated equally.

Changes in attitudes and behaviours can be achieved when positive attitudes, behaviours and equality are lived across the school community, and when classroom learning is reinforced by what is modelled in our school community. Students are further supported to build their social and emotional skills, including confidence, resilience, respect and help-seeking behaviour.

Resilience building for students

Resilience is the ability to cope and thrive in the face of negative events, challenges or adversity. It is a skill that can be developed through:
- positive social connections
- safe environments
- life skills such as positive coping and problem solving skills

- pro-social values
- positive self-regard
- and a sense of purpose and agency or responsibility.

Building staff capacity to promote and protect positive mental health

When school staff, leaders, teachers and educators are given the resources and tools to promote and model positive behaviours, values and inclusivity, this improves teacher-student relationships and builds inclusive and safe school communities to support everyone's wellbeing and improved learning outcomes.

Curriculum and teaching

The Victorian Curriculum supports the teaching of mental health, wellbeing and resilience of all students in schools through the learning areas of Health and Physical Education, and the Personal and Social Capability.

Health and Physical Education Learning Area

Focuses on students enhancing their own and others' health, safety, wellbeing and physical activity participation in varied and changing contexts. The curriculum focuses on supporting students to develop the understanding and skills they require to make healthy and safe choices that will enhance their own and others' health and wellbeing.

See health and physical education learning area resources

Personal and Social Capability

This involves students:
- learning to recognise and regulate emotions
- develop empathy for others and understand relationships
- establish and build a framework for positive relationships
- work effectively in teams and develop leadership skills,
- handle challenging situations constructively.

See personal and social capability resources

Identifying Students in Need of Support

MEPS is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. The School Improvement Team (SIT), Student Wellbeing and Engagement Priority Team and the Student Wellbeing Response Team (SWRT) play significant roles in developing and implementing strategies to help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing.

MEPS utilises 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 at the school
- Attendance records
- Academic performance
- Observations by school staff such as changes in engagement, behaviour, self-care, social connectedness and motivation
- Engagement with families
- Self-referrals or referrals from peers
- Detention and suspension data

Attendance

Research supports the belief that regular attendance is a major factor contributing to student achievement and wellbeing. MEPS has a long history of excellent student attendance, with family holidays during school terms playing a significant role in absences. In more recent times, absence due to COVID related illness has been impactful as well. Where issues of student attendance appear to be developing, parents will be contacted to discuss the issue.

See our Attendance Policy for further details

Bullying

It is everyone's right and responsibility to report any and all acts of bullying. All reports of bullying will be taken seriously and be acted on immediately by the school. Confidentiality will be respected.

What is Bullying?

"Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening.

Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (for example, through sharing of digital records).

Bullying of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium and long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders. Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying."
Department of Education & Training

Bullying has three main features:
- It involves a misuse of power in a relationship
- It is ongoing and repeated, and
- It involves behaviours that can cause harm.

Bullying can be:
1. *direct* physical bullying – e.g. hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property.
2. *direct* verbal bullying – e.g. name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse.
3. *indirect* bullying – e.g. spreading rumours, playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate, mimicking, encouraging others to socially exclude a person and/or damaging a person's social reputation or social acceptance.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is direct or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technology. For example via a mobile device, computers, chat rooms, email, social media, etc. It can be verbal, written and include images, video and/or audio.

Cyberbullying is an insidious form of bullying. MEPS minimises the opportunity for it to occur, ensuring that students do not use mobile phones during the school day and preventing access to social networking sites through the school's network by the use of effective filtering software. We are also involved in e-Smart programs through the Alannah and Madeline Foundation, Cyber Safety Project and resources available from the Office of the e-Safety Commissioner.

All staff have the responsibility to ensure that:
- All forms of cyberbullying are prohibited
- Staff, parents/carers and students are aware of cyberbullying and provide regular experiences to remain up to date with technology and strategies to stay safe online.
- An Acceptable Use Policy is in use for technology, including iPads, computers, mobile phones, wearable technology and other mobile devices, whilst on school premises and this code is discussed and circulated at the beginning of each school year.
- All cases of cyberbullying are reported to the Assistant Principal/Principal and responded to promptly.
- There is supervision of technologies where cyberbullying may occur.
- Anyone who participates in cyberbullying will have all rights to technology revoked for a specified period of time.
- Mobile phones, cameras or other digital devices are not used to record audio or visual material that is not an authorised part of the school curriculum.
- The privacy of students, staff and members of the school community is not to be compromised unless a Duty of Care instance arises.

Other Distressing and Inappropriate Behaviours

Many distressing and inappropriate behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant. Students who are involved in or who witness any distressing and inappropriate behaviours should report their concerns to school staff.

Mutual conflict involves an argument or disagreement between people with no imbalance of power. In incidents of mutual conflict, generally, both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the issue. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation.

Social rejection or dislike is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

Single-episode acts of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. However, single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not acceptable behaviours at our school and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour.

Harassment is language or actions that are demeaning, offensive or intimidating to a person. It can take many forms, including sexual harassment and disability harassment. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated at Mt Eliza Primary School and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour.

Bullying Prevention

Throughout the year, all classes will discuss the many forms of bullying at an age appropriate level and continually revisit our school values and expected behaviours.

Mt Eliza Primary School has a number of programs and strategies in place to build a positive and inclusive school culture. We strive to foster a school culture that prevents bullying behaviour by modelling and encouraging behaviour that demonstrates acceptance, kindness and respect.

Bullying prevention at MEPS is proactive and is supported by research that indicates that a whole school, multifaceted approach is the most effective way to prevent and address bullying. At our school:

- We have a positive school environment that provides safety, security and support for students and promotes positive relationships and wellbeing.
- We strive to build strong partnerships between the school, families and the broader community that means all members work together to ensure the safety of students.
- Teachers are encouraged to incorporate classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour.
- A range of year level incursions and programs are planned for each year to raise awareness about bullying and its impacts.
- In the classroom, our social and emotional learning curriculum teaches students what constitutes bullying and how to respond to bullying behaviour assertively. This promotes resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- We seek to empower students to be confident communicators and to resolve conflict in a non-aggressive and constructive way.
- Students are encouraged to look out for each other and to talk to teachers and older peers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed.
- We participate actively in the National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence.

Bullying Incident Response

Reporting concerns

Bullying complaints will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively at our school.

Students who may be experiencing bullying behaviour, or students who have witnessed bullying behaviour, are encouraged to report their concerns to school staff as soon as possible.

Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate bullying behaviour is greatly impacted by students and/or parents and carers reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by MEPS are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

We encourage students to speak to their teacher. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including the Sub School Leader, Head of Inclusion and Intervention, School Counsellor, Assistant Principal and/or Principal.

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at MEPS should contact their child's teacher in the first instance. Other staff may be involved depending on the follow up. *See Communication Policy and Flowchart.*

Investigations

When notified of alleged bullying behaviour, school staff are required to:

1. Record the details of the allegations in Sentral; and
2. Inform the relevant staff i.e., Sub School Leader, Assistant Principal and Principal.

Depending on the circumstances, the Sub School Leader/Assistant Principal/Principal is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the investigator may:

- speak to the those involved in the allegations, including the target/s, the students allegedly engaging in bullying behaviour/s and any witnesses to the incidents
- speak to the parents of the students involved
- speak to the teachers of the students involved
- take detailed notes of all discussions for future reference
- obtain written statements from all or any of the above.

All communications with the investigator in the course of investigating an allegation of bullying will be managed sensitively. Investigations will be completed as quickly as possible to allow for the behaviours to be addressed in a timely manner.

The objective of completing a thorough investigation into the circumstances of alleged bullying behaviour is to determine the nature of the conduct and the students involved. A thorough understanding of the alleged bullying will inform staff about how to most effectively implement an appropriate response to that behaviour.

Serious bullying, including serious cyberbullying, is a criminal offence and may be referred to Victoria Police. For more information, see: Brodie's Law.

Responses to bullying behaviours

When the investigator has sufficient information to understand the circumstances of the alleged bullying and the students involved, a number of strategies may be implemented to address the behaviour and support affected students in consultation with Student Wellbeing Response Team, teachers, SSS, Assistant Principal, Principal, School Counselor, Department of Education and Training specialist staff etc.

There are a number of factors that will be considered when determining the most appropriate response to the behaviour. When making a decision about how to respond to bullying behaviour, MEPS will consider:

- Age and maturity of the students involved
- Severity and frequency of the bullying, and the impact it has had on the target student
- Whether the student/s engaging in bullying behaviour have displayed similar behaviour before
- Whether the bullying took place in a group or one-to-one context
- Whether the students engaging in bullying behaviour demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour
- Alleged motive of the behaviour, including any element of provocation.

The school may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling support to the target student or students, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Response Team, School Counselor, SSS and/or external provider.
- Offer counselling support to the students engaging in bullying behaviour, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Response Team, School Counselor, SSS and/or external provider.
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Response Team, School Counselor, SSS and/or external provider.
- Facilitate a restorative practice meeting with all or some of the students involved. The objective of restorative practice is to repair relationships that have been damaged by bringing about a sense of remorse and restorative action on the part of the person who has bullied someone and forgiveness by the person who has been bullied.
- Facilitate a mediation between some or all of the students involved to help to encourage students to take responsibility for their behaviour and explore underlying reasons for conflict or grievance. Mediation is only suitable if all students are involved voluntarily and demonstrate a willingness to engage in the mediation process.
- Facilitate a process using the Support Group Method, involving the target student(s), the students engaging in bullying behaviour and a group of students who are likely to be supportive of the target(s).
- Implement a Method of Shared Concern process with all students involved in the bullying.

- Facilitate a Student Support Group meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students.
- Prepare a Safety Plan or Individual Management Plan restricting contact between target and students engaging in bullying behaviour.
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved, including connecting affected students with an older Student Mentor, resilience programs, etc.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Implement year level targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours, for example lunchtime social skills clubs, changes to schedules, relevant incursions, positive feedback etc.
- Implement disciplinary consequences for the students engaging in bullying behaviour, which may include removal of privileges, detention, suspension and/or expulsion consistent with the rest of this policy, the Ministerial Order on Suspensions and Expulsions and any other relevant Department policy.

MEPS understands the importance of monitoring and following up on the progress of students who have been involved in or affected by bullying behaviour. Where appropriate, school staff will also endeavour to provide parents and carers with updates on the management of bullying incidents.

The investigator is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

MEPS Community Rights and Responsibilities

At MEPS, we believe it is the **right** of every individual to feel safe in a supportive environment, to have an equal opportunity to learn and to have their individuality, ideas and property respected. We expect that all students, staff, parents and carers treat each other with respect and dignity. Our school's Wellbeing Statement highlights the rights and responsibilities of members of our community.

'At Mt Eliza Primary School we choose to think and act safely, make wise choices, listen and speak respectfully and are brave enough to learn.'

MEPS STUDENTS

RIGHTS	RESPONSIBILITIES
To be able to learn and feel secure in a safe, supportive environment. To learn in an environment free from bullying, harassment, violence, racism, discrimination or intimidation.	To act in a safe, responsible manner and to be supportive of fellow students. To speak respectfully to all school community members. To display positive behaviours that demonstrate respect for themselves, their peers, their teachers and members of the school community.
To have his/her/their opinion and property respected. To express their ideas, feelings and concerns.	To be considerate of others' feelings and respect their belongings. To respect the right of others to learn.
To have appropriate access to school facilities.	To take care of all school environments and shared school equipment.
To have appropriate access to the teacher.	To respect the rights of others to share the teacher's time.
To know what is expected behaviour (appropriate) and unexpected behaviour (inappropriate) behaviour.	To be aware of the school's expectations and accept consequences when necessary.
To have his/her/their individual learning needs understood and catered for.	To demonstrate learning dispositions and work to the best of his/her/their ability. To participate fully in their educational program.

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 (refer to the Parent Concerns/Complaints Policy).

MEPS STAFF

RIGHTS	RESPONSIBILITIES
To work in a positive, safe environment and to be treated with courtesy by all.	To act as role models and provide suitable, interesting learning tasks while maintaining a safe environment.
To be able to implement appropriate management strategies for all children, dealing fairly and clearly with those who are interfering with the rights of others.	To be consistent and fair in the implementation of management techniques.
To contact parents/carers when necessary and to expect their support.	To be approachable, to listen and be prepared to consult respectfully with parents/carers.
To be informed of any family situation or home issue that may impact a student's learning or behaviour.	To act appropriately and discretely and make time to act on information.
To be involved in a collaborative decision-making model within the school.	To reflect on school-based issues and be prepared to consult, contribute and negotiate.
To be seen as an individual able to express a point of view.	To be open-minded and ready to take on others' opinions and points of view.

MEPS PARENTS/CARERS

MEPS 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 understanding their rights and responsibilities:

RIGHTS	RESPONSIBILITIES
To have information on school processes and curriculum. To be able to access our school policies and procedures, available on our school website	To understand and support school and Department policies and any subsequent changes.
To expect an open, respectful line of communication between parents and staff, supported by our Communication Protocol.	To act in a respectful manner toward school staff.
To be able to participate in school decision making processes.	To make time to be involved in their child/ren's learning. To contribute to parent organisations, where possible, such as School Council, PTA, Class Coordinators and/or provide feedback to the school as appropriate.
To be provided with opportunities to contribute to school activities.	To contribute where possible as a parent volunteer and/or support school events/initiatives.
To expect consistent approaches to school expectations throughout the school.	To reinforce/support school practices at home and advise the school of any concerns. To notify the school of student absences.
To expect that there will be no form of discrimination against parents/carers, staff or children.	To be aware of the adverse effects of discrimination and to model appropriate behaviours. To speak and act respectfully to all school community members.
To receive and offer information regarding their child's educational progress and behaviour. To have access to resources and services from the community for families.	To request assistance and/or interviews and to share any home issues that may affect the child's learning. To attend Student Support Group meetings and contribute to developing individual plans for students, where appropriate.

Student Behavioural Expectations

The school has clear approaches to assist all students to become and remain engaged in their educational journey at Mt Eliza Primary School. We recognise that young people need knowledge and a range of social, personal and thinking skills to be successful. They need to develop the capacity to manage themselves as individuals, in relation to others, to understand the world in which they live, and to act effectively and appropriately within that world.

Behavioural expectations of students, staff and families are grounded in our school's values and wellbeing statement. Student bullying behaviour will be responded to consistently, as per the Bullying section above and the Bullying Policy.

MEPS has developed a range of positive behaviour interventions:
- Verbally acknowledging positive interactions when children display our school values.
- Classroom acknowledgement for children displaying positive behaviours. This varies in each classroom and/or area. However, it may include initiatives such as star charts, Class Dojo points, raffles and rewards for individual/group success.
- Use of Zones of Regulation and Social Thinking to promote and extend teaching about perspective taking, social self regulation, the social-emotional chain reaction and executive functioning.
- Classroom management procedures that include positive interaction with a variety of teachers and encourages strategies for self-discipline and development of responsibility for actions. This is managed through Circle Time and Restorative Practices approaches.
- First Tier student responders

When a student acts in breach of the behaviour expectations of our school community, MEPS 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 action taken by teachers and/or other school staff.

Our school considers, explores and implements positive and non-punitive interventions to support student behaviour before considering disciplinary measures such as 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. As per the Bullying response, there are a number of factors that will be considered when determining the most appropriate response to the behaviour. When making a decision about how to respond to inappropriate behaviour, MEPS will consider:

- Age and maturity of the students involved
- Severity and frequency of the behaviour, and the impact it has had
- Whether the student/s engaging in the behaviour have displayed similar behaviour before
- Whether the behaviour took place in a group or one-to-one context
- Whether the student/s engaging in the behaviour demonstrates insight or remorse for their actions
- Context and/or alleged motive of the behaviour, including any element of provocation.

Disciplinary measures at our school will be applied fairly and appropriate to the situation. Students will always be provided with an opportunity to be heard.

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 MEPS 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.

Evaluation

MEPS 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:

1. Student and Parent survey data
4. Case management records

2. Incidents data	5. CASES21
3. School reports	6. Student Online Case System (SOCS)

MEPS 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 and/or annual report
- Discussed at staff briefings/meetings as required
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- 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/policy

Expulsions - Decision
https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/expulsions/guidance/decision

Further Information and Resources

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Parent Concerns and Complaints Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Four Critical Actions - Child Abuse
- Parent Complaints Policy Flowchart

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

Further resources include:
- DET Bullying Prevention and Response
https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/bullying-prevention-response/policy

The following websites and resources provide useful information on prevention and responding to bullying, as well as supporting students who have been the target of bullying behaviours:

- [Bully Stoppers](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#)
- [Lifeline](#)
- [Bullying. No way!](#)
- [Student Wellbeing Hub](#)
- [Office of the eSafety Commissioner](#)
- [Australian Student Wellbeing Framework](#)
- [Brodie's Law.](#)

Policy Review and Renewal

This policy will be reviewed as part of MEPS two-year review cycle.

Policy last reviewed	22/5/22
Consultation	Approved by: Dean Charge, School Council President Signature: Consultation: School Council, Wellbeing & Engagement Priority Team, Student Leaders, Parents and students through surveys and discussion
Approved by	Principal, Kim Wheeler
Next scheduled review date	22/5/24