

# STUDENT WELLBEING AND EGAGEMENT POLICY



# Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy

HELP FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS - If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Montague School on 03 9690 3535 or montague @education.vic.gov.au.

## PURPOSE

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

- a) our commitment to providing a safe and supportive learning environment for students
- b) expectations for positive student behaviour
- c) support available to students and families
- d) our school's policies and procedures for responding to inappropriate student behaviour.

Montague 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.

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2. School values, philosophy and vision
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4. Identifying students in need of support
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## POLICY

### 1. School Profile

For almost a century, Montague School has been at the leading edge of program development for students with mild intellectual disability. Montague School opened in 1886. The school building was designed by Henry Bastow, whose memory is now enshrined in the Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership which is housed in another of the buildings he designed, the Queensberry Street State School in North Melbourne. Since the early 1900s, momentum

was building in Victoria to establish special schools for students with an intellectual disability and in 1928, Montague School became a Special School in its own right, with Bessie Scott as its first Head Teacher. Innovative programs and teaching methods during the 1940s and 1950s saw Montague School used as a training school for student teachers from the Melbourne Teachers' College.

In 1960 a major initiative of the staff under the guidance of Head Teacher Miss Jean Trehwella, was the development of the first established and recognised work experience program in any school in Victoria and probably Australia. It is the only Victorian school where every student undertakes work experience at every year of enrolment. Added to this are the various industry and collating programs that have been set up and developed over the years. Vocational Education continues to be an important part of the curriculum with students working towards gaining their VPC and VET certificates and undertaking work experience.

Throughout Montague's time as a special school, it has remained at the forefront of initiatives in the teaching of students with mild intellectual disability. Montague School is recognised as a high-end provider of vocational education and care programs for students aged 15 to 18. We address the needs of young people who are prone to falling through the cracks of a traditional school setting. We provide a very structured, personal, planned approach to their education and prepare them for life beyond school. Our team includes teachers, teaching assistants, youth workers, counsellors, psychologists, special educators, as well as other allied health professionals. The principles that underpin our practice of teaching, knowledge and learning are designed to be enduring, challenging and connected. These principles are founded on strong, positive and supportive relationships. We affectionately refer to our school as MONTY.

## **2. School Values, Philosophy and Vision**

Montague School's Statement of Values and School Philosophy is integral to the work that we do and is the foundation of our school community. Students, staff and members of our school community are encouraged to live and demonstrate our core values of respect, integrity and kindness at every opportunity.

Our school's vision is to empower students to reach their personal best, and fully equip them to contribute positively to society as happy, healthy young adults.

Our School Values are represented through the story of 'Monty the Crane'

'The beautiful Crane is a strong and majestic bird symbolising honour, loyalty, long life and healing. Many cultures have favoured the Origami Crane for centuries, but it was made most famous by a young resident of Hiroshima, Sadako Sasaki. Sadako is credited with enshrining the Origami Crane as a symbol of the importance of balance and living in harmony with each other.

The strong wings of the Crane are believed to provide protection. There's a traditional prayer in Japan that is recited by mothers who are concerned for their children:

"O flock of heavenly cranes, cover my child with your wings."

Much like a student's education, the creation of an Origami Crane results from patience, persistence, and precision. The Montague School logo uses the M from the school's name to highlight that the pathway students take may have its ups and downs, but with strength, protection and the support of their community, the Montague students will take flight, discover a pathway suited to their skills and live fulfilled and productive lives. The colours used in the Montague Crane represent and embrace diversity.'

### **3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies**

Montague School is a community that promotes student wellbeing, safety and positive relationships so that students can reach their full potential. Our student Wellness, Inclusion and Safety program is based on evidence that demonstrates the strong association between safety, student wellbeing and learning. The program engages five key elements for building communities where wellness can flourish (adopted from The Australian Student Wellbeing Framework). These five elements are

1. Inclusive and Connected School Culture
2. Authentic Student Voice and Participation
3. Effective family and Community Partnerships
4. Wellbeing Support for Positive Behaviours
5. Visible Leadership to inspire positive School Communities

Health and wellbeing are essential for quality of life and are fundamental preconditions for learning and development. Montague School's Wellbeing Team is committed to ensuring that all students receive health and wellbeing services that are accessible and inclusive, including the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. We aim to empower our students to cultivate a sense of ownership over their social and emotional wellbeing and build resilience to support them in their life journey.

The student wellbeing program is underpinned by the philosophy of positive psychology and is guided by our Positive Learning Framework (PLF). The PLF maximises conditions and processes that optimise teaching and learning practices.

Montague 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

These whole of school strategies to promote positive behaviour and inclusion.

- 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 including vet programs offering the VPC to ensure that students are able to choose subjects and programs that are tailored to their interests, strengths and aspirations
- Teachers at Montague School use a pedagogical 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 Montague 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 can contribute to and provide feedback on decisions about school operations through the student representative council and other forums including year group meetings. Students are also encouraged to speak with their teachers, year level coordinator, assistant principal and principal whenever they have any questions or concerns.
- Create opportunities for cross—age connections amongst students through school plays, athletics, music programs and peer support programs
- All students are welcome to self-refer to their teachers, the educational support staff, student wellbeing coordinator, school nurse, 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
  - Bully Stoppers

## Safe Schools

- Programs, incursions and excursions developed to enable students to experience broader life options
- Opportunities for student inclusion (i.e. Sports teams, clubs, recess and lunchtime activities)
- Buddy programs, peers support programs
- 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

Targeted year level strategies to build engagement include

- Each year group has a Home Group Teacher and allocated ES for their group, who monitor the health and wellbeing of students in their year, and act as a point of contact for students who may need additional support
- Koorie students are supported to engage fully in their education, in a positive learning environment that understands and appreciates the strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture – refer to our Aboriginal-Learning-Wellbeing-Safety policy for further information
- Our English as a second language students are supported through our EAL program, and all cultural and linguistically diverse students are supported to feel safe and included in our school
- We support learning and wellbeing outcomes of students from refugee background through
- We provide a positive and respectful learning environment for our students who identify as LGBTIQ+ and follow the Department’s policy on LGBTIQ Student Support
- All students in Out of Home Care are supported in accordance with the Department’s policy on Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care including being appointed a Learning Mentor, having an Individual Learning Plan and a Student Support Group (SSG) and being referred to Student Support Services for an Educational Needs Assessment
- Students with a disability are supported to be able to engage fully in their learning and school activities in accordance with the Department’s policy on Students with Disability, such as through reasonable adjustments to support access to learning programs, consultation with families and where required, student support groups and individual education plans
- Wellbeing and health staff will undertake health promotion and social skills development in response to needs identified by student wellbeing data, classroom teachers or other school staff each year
- Staff will apply a trauma-informed approach to working with students who have experienced trauma
- 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
- All students from Year 10 and above will be assisted to develop a Career Action Plan, with targeted goals and support to plan for their future

- Montague School assists students to plan their Year 10 work experience, supported by their Career Action Plan

## **Individual**

Montague School implements a range of strategies that support and promote individual engagement. Student specific strategies are considered and applied on a case by case basis.

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:
- 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 ChildFirst
- Re-engagement programs such as Navigator

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
- Engaging with our regional koorie engagement support officers
- Running regular student support group meetings for all students:
- With a disability
- In out of home care
- With other complex needs that require ongoing support and monitoring.

## **4. Identifying students in need of support**

Montague 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. Montague 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
- Psychologists and mental health professionals

## **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.

## **6. Student behavioural expectations and management**

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

Violence, bullying, and other offensive and harmful behaviours such as racism, harassment and discrimination will not be tolerated and will be managed in accordance with 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, Montague 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 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, 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 Montague 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.

## **7. Engaging with families**

Montague 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 plans for students.

## **8. Evaluation**

Montague 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

Montague 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 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 of Education and Training policies are relevant to this Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy:

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

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

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

### Approval and Reporting

Created date	23 November 2024
Consultation	Students, parents, staff, school council
Approved by	Principal
Review date	Term 1, 2026

