

Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy



Help for non-English speakers:

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact (03) 9687 1910, footscray.ps@education.vic.gov.au, or visit our school office.

Purpose

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

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

Footscray 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.

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Policy

1. School profile

Footscray Primary School is a Foundation to Year 6 school that has served the local community for 162 years. Located in Melbourne's inner west, we are proud of our strong community connections and global outlook. More than 30 cultures and a variety of socio-economic dynamics are represented within the school's population of approximately 340 students. We believe this diversity provides rich and authentic opportunities for our students to develop empathy, understanding and open-mindedness.

Footscray Primary School's central purpose is Learning for Living. We offer an inquiry-based curriculum through the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (PYP), underpinned by the Victorian Curriculum. Through the PYP, we provide opportunities for our students to understand essential concepts, skills, knowledge and attitudes that will enable them to be life-long learners in our ever-changing world. Footscray Primary School is a Designated Bilingual Program school and we value the many benefits of language learning. Our school community aims to ensure that every school experience is positive and respectful and we are guided by Respectful Relationships and School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS). We celebrate diversity and believe a sense of belonging and inclusion are fundamental to children's learning and ability to fully participate in life at school and beyond. We believe that all children have the right to learn and feel safe.

0. School pillars, philosophy and vision

Our school vision is to develop inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world.

In recent years, we have introduced four guiding pillars to our school community. These pillars represent who we are as Footscray Primary School, and represent the range of values, dispositions and behaviours that come together to create the strong foundation for the way we aspire to live, learn, grow and play as a school community.

- Inquiry
- Connection
- Equity
- Empowerment

We aim to continue building a collective understanding of these pillars in our school community in coming years.

In 2021, our school community underwent a consultation process to identify three guiding behaviour expectations, as part of our participation in School-wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS). Three expectations were selected, which provide consistent language and understanding to guide positive engagement between all school community members.

- We are respectful.
- We are responsible.
- We are proud.

0. Wellbeing and engagement strategies

Footscray Primary School utilises 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 that student learning and wellbeing are closely linked, and both must be addressed to create optimal conditions for learning growth. As students learn and grow over time, we acknowledge that different students present with needs that require differing levels of intervention and support. We use the multi-tiered system of supports model to conceptualise the application of universal (whole-school), targeted (specific groups), and individualised supports and strategies, responsive to student need.

Universal Strategies

Footscray Primary School's universal strategies to support wellbeing and engagement include:

- high and consistent expectations of all staff, students and parents and carers, informed by the Department's Code of Conduct policy, Respectful Behaviours within the School Community policy, and SWPBS framework
- prioritise positive relationships between staff and students, recognising the fundamental role this plays in building and sustaining student wellbeing, identified as a key outcome of our annual 'Start Up Program' undertaken each year
- creating a culture that is inclusive, engaging and supportive and that embraces and celebrates diversity and empowers all students to participate and feel valued, as celebrated through our annual Calendar of Significant events, recognising cultural celebrations and days of importance specific to those within our school community
- 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
- staff at Footscray Primary School use the Footscray Primary Learning Model to ensure an explicit, common and shared model of evidence-based instruction is used, with high yield teaching practices incorporated into all lessons
- staff at Footscray 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, as represented in our extended Foundation transition program and comprehensive end-of-year handover class list creation factoring in student learning needs
- positive behaviour and student achievement is acknowledged in the classroom, and formally in school assemblies and communication to parents through our SWPBS practices
- monitor student attendance and implement attendance improvement strategies at a whole-school, cohort and individual level, led by our Mental Health and Wellbeing Leader
- students have the opportunity to contribute to and provide feedback on decisions about school operations through our Year 6 Leaders program
- create opportunities for cross—age connections amongst students through school events, lunch clubs, safe spaces such as the Friendship Zone or Student Support Space, additional out of school hours services such as Chess Club or Kelly Sports, and our ongoing buddy program
- all students are welcome to self-refer to their teacher, Wellbeing Leader, Assistant Principal and/or 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
 - School-wide Positive Behaviour Support
- programs, incursions and excursions developed to address issue specific needs or behavioural support
- staff engage in high-quality and diverse year long professional development connected to improving student outcomes in areas of learning and social/emotional development, as well as student wellbeing and engagement, as identified in our Annual Implementation Plan
- 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 Strategies

Footscray Primary School’s targeted strategies to support wellbeing and engagement include:

- each year group has a leadership contact who can be engaged for support with wellbeing, engagement or behavioural concerns. Additionally the Mental Health and

Wellbeing Leader, Inclusion and Engagement Leader, Assistant Principal and Principal are available to all staff for consultation and support when required

- 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. We are proud to have an active Reconciliation Action Plan, reconciliation working group comprising staff and community members, and active involvement with our Koorie Engagement Support Officers and Koorie Engagement Workforce
- we support learning and wellbeing outcomes of students from refugee background through collaboration with available support services and, if appropriate, external agencies such as Foundation House. Please refer to relevant [Department advice](#)
- 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 displaying at-risk attendance patterns are contacted and supported by our Mental Health and Wellbeing Leader to facilitate increased engagement through Return to School 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
- our Mental Health and Wellbeing Leader facilitates social skills groups within different year groups, through advice and feedback from students, families and/or staff
- education support staff provide additional learning and behavioural support to identified students, at the discretion of available human and financial resources and Principal approval
- students can be referred to the Student Support Space for supervised and guided restorative practices with other peers and/or staff
- staff operate a Breakfast Club once per week, sponsored by Foodbank Victoria, providing breakfast and social connection to all interested students
- staff and community members facilitate our ongoing Community Pantry, providing free access to common grocery items for all families

- 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](#)

Individual Strategies

Footscray Primary School’s individualised strategies to support wellbeing and engagement include:

- building constructive relationships with students at risk or students who are vulnerable due to complex individual circumstances
- individual meetings 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 Plan or Return to School Plan in collaboration with the student and their family
- engaging with our regional Koorie Engagement Support Officers
- running termly Student Support Group meetings for all students:
 - with a disability funded under the Program for Students with Disabilities/Disability Inclusion
 - in Out of Home Care
 - with other complex needs that require ongoing support and monitoring.

0. Identifying students in need of support

Footscray Primary 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 to help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. Footscray 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
- Foundation transition statements
- 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
- information and/or feedback provided from allied health services

0. 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.

0. Student behavioural expectations and management

Behavioural expectations of students are grounded in our school's positive behaviour expectations matrix. 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, Footscray 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 action taken by teachers and other school staff.

Our school considers, explores, and implements positive and non-punitive interventions, in-line with evidence-based practice, to support student behaviour before considering disciplinary measures such as withdrawal of privileges, withdrawal from class or suspension.

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 additional support staff such as Team Leader, or a member of the Leadership Team
- restorative practices
- 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 Footscray 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.

0. Engaging with families

Footscray Primary School values the input of parents and carers, and we will strive to support families to engage in their child's learning and build their capacity as active learners. We aim to be partners in learning with parents and carers in our school community.

We work hard to create successful partnerships with parents and carers by:

- ensuring that all parents have access to our school policies and procedures, available on our school website.
- maintaining an open, respectful line of communication between parents and staff, supported by our Communicating with School Staff policy.
- providing parent volunteer opportunities so that families can contribute to school activities.
- involving families with home-based tasks 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.

0. Evaluation

Footscray 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 opinion survey
- case management meetings
- CASES21, including attendance and absence data
- Student Online Case System (SOCS)

Footscray Primary School will also regularly monitor available data dashboards through our Compass Student Management System 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](#)
- [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

Policy Review and Approval

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