

ESSEX HEIGHTS PRIMARY SCHOOL **STUDENT ENGAGEMENT POLICY**

This policy should be read with reference to: the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) guidelines; in particular the Effective Schools are Engaging Schools Student Engagement Policy Guidelines, the Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct at http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/content.asp?Document_ID=25, the Disability Standards for Education 2005, the school's policy manual, in particular the Student Code of Conduct Policy, and the school's legal responsibilities. The following legislation is also relevant: the *Equal Opportunity Act 1995*; the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*; the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*.

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1. School Profile Statement

Essex Heights Primary School is situated in Mount Waverley, Melbourne. It provides high quality education that strives to prepare and empower students for meaningful and responsible involvement in a changing global society.

Through our core values of respect, integrity, optimism and inclusiveness, children develop positive attitudes and acquire skills that equip them for their future. All children are valued within a supportive and stimulating school environment where each child is encouraged to reach his/her potential. Essex Heights Primary School employs a "Restorative Practices" approach to relationship building and behaviour management that recognises the explicit link between student wellbeing and educational outcomes.

The whole community encourages high expectations and promotes innovative and contemporary curriculum, differentiated to cater for the needs of all children. The school strives to equip students for the modern world by promoting a culture of connectedness and creativity and by developing literacy in all realms.

Staff values a culture of inquiry, reflection and learning as they are committed to professional and personal growth. There is a continuous focus on school improvement.

The school community strives to upgrade and improve the school's facilities and resources to support innovative and rich learning.

2. Whole-School Prevention Statement

Essex Heights Primary School seeks to provide an enriching, supportive and motivating learning environment that challenges the school community to strive for their personal best and optimise learning opportunities for all students. Essex Heights Primary School has a long tradition of inclusive education embracing diversity within our community. Students are immersed in a broad and differentiated curriculum.

In order to prevent students from disengaging we have numerous programs in place which support our students to attend school regularly, participate in class and enjoy learning.

Our Student Wellbeing focus aims to empower individuals and teams to enable a sense of connectedness, purpose and zest for life. We seek to help build self confidence, self esteem and resilience in order for our students to approach future life experiences, opportunities and challenges with self-assurance and energy.

Our whole school student wellbeing program is based on the You Can Do It, Program. It incorporates a suite of additional programs based on our values, a philosophy of prevention and early intervention, thinking skills (Habits of Mind) and social emotional learning (Emotional Intelligence and Social Competencies development).

Our two week Learning Community program, implemented across the school at the start of Term 1 each year, is a vital part of setting up a classroom culture of respect, co-operation and positive relationships. This articulates and supports our whole school *Behaviours and Expectations* which provides a clear, consistent approach. Each student engages with the Student Code of Conduct in a child-centred, developmentally appropriate, learning environment that recognises, fosters and promotes the intellectual, social, emotional and physical development of each child. We understand that many children have unique wellbeing and learning needs and we are committed to addressing these needs.

We have a clear Anti-Bullying Policy and support the DEECD strategy '*Safe Schools are Effective Schools*'. This highlights that every student has the right to feel safe from bullying at school. All forms of bullying, whether physical, verbal or cyber are not tolerated at any level at Essex Heights Primary School. Students will be provided with the understanding and strategies that will assist them to deal and cope with bullying and cyber bullying scenarios. They will learn to understand the seriousness of anti social 'bullying' behaviour.

Engagement Strategies

At Essex Heights Primary School a range of programs specifically teach and foster:

- Positive Habits of the Mind (Self Talk)
- Shared Community Values
- Student Leadership and development of the Student Voice
- Social Competencies and
- Cooperative Learning Strategies

We strive to provide effective supports for students in need. Currently we implement a range of programs, strategies and supports for students at our school directly linked to providing effective student engagement. These include:

- *Information Communication Technologies (ICT)* are embedded within learning to maximize the engagement of all students.
- *Program Achieve: You Can Do It* is a values Education program that identifies the four key foundations and the eleven Habits of the Mind that underpin success;
- *Karen Brunskill's Healthy Relationships* program teaches human values, sets boundaries for behaviour and creates a learning environment whereby full participation of each student is optimized;
- *Restorative practice* approaches including classroom circle time linked to relationship building;
- In addition further differentiated programs are accessed including: *Bounce Back*; *Art Costa's Habits of Mind*; *MAT – Martial Arts Therapy* program; other anti bullying programs such as *Friendly Schools and Families*;
- Utilisation of 'expert' support through educational psychologists, school nurse, speech pathologists, visiting teachers and external agencies; disability support programs; intervention programs for Literacy and Numeracy; teacher aides;
- Individual Learning Plans; individual behaviour plans;
- parent information forums;
- Before and After School Care;
- playground and lunchtime programs.

Student Wellbeing: Early Intervention

We believe that a successful behaviour management approach is far more than a single program or product. It is an ongoing process involving every member of the school community, differentiated according to individual need.

The Essex Heights Student Code of Conduct highlights the values of the school community and the behaviours it expects will be demonstrated. It links very closely to our preventative approach through empowering children to recognize and accept responsibility for how they choose to behave.

A restorative approach is used whereby relationships are restored and damage is repaired. Our focus is on expectations rather than rules, consequences rather than punishments and problem solving rather than conflict. Our dialogue with children is characterised by expressions such as getting along, cooperation and respect.

At the beginning of the year, as part of our focus on “Creating Our Learning Community”, each class establishes their class values and expectations of each other within the context of the Student Code of Conduct and our Expectations and Behaviours. There is a focus on identifying and acknowledging appropriate behaviour, rewarding it in a variety of ways including stickers, tickets, reward points and whole class rewards such as a special activity at the end of the term. The foundation of identifying and acknowledging appropriate behaviour is verbal praise and recognition. In addition to on-going praise and acknowledgement at an individual level, within the classroom and playground, each week teachers select students to receive ‘Student of the Week’ awards. These awards are presented at our school assembly and are a source of great pride and celebration.

While our focus is on promoting appropriate behaviour, consequences may be provided when children choose to behave in inappropriate ways. In most circumstances, this will usually involve the inappropriate behaviour being identified and the child given an opportunity to modify their behaviour. If a child chooses not to respond to this learning opportunity, further consequences will be imposed such as withdrawal to a quiet area within the classroom or into another nearby classroom.

In more serious circumstances the student would be referred through the Student Management process. Parents are contacted where there are any concerns and are advised if their child is referred to the Student Management team. Information related to suspension and expulsion procedures are located in the last section of this policy.

Playground programs

Our approach to student management in the playground is similar to that in the classroom, with the same expectations and values being promoted. Teachers supervising in the playground acknowledge appropriate behaviour verbally. A similar process to the classroom will be followed if a child chooses to behave inappropriately in the playground. The inappropriate behaviour will be identified and the child given the opportunity to modify the behaviour. If the child chooses not to respond to this warning, the child may be required to walk with the supervising teacher for a period of time. In more serious circumstances an Incident Report is completed, the parent is contacted and an appropriate intervention program is designed to support the student(s).

Community Partnerships

Student Management is most effective when parents, children and teachers work together to establish the values and expectations of the school community and appropriate behaviour in the classroom and the playground. In some circumstances, parents will be invited to join with their child’s teacher to develop an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) to assist their child develop appropriate behaviour patterns in the classroom or the playground. An Individual Learning Plan will identify the skills to be developed and will outline strategies to be used at school and, if appropriate, at home. We place great importance on this partnership and value the support of parents and children.

At Essex Heights, we have an active commitment to promoting children’s personal well being and feeling of safety and security as vital precursors to successful learning.

Attendance

The school promotes the philosophy of: 'It's Not Okay To Be Away' and we believe that attending school every day is important for a student's education. The importance of regular attendance at school is promoted in the school newsletter.

3. Rights and Responsibilities

Every member of the school community has a right to fully participate in an educational environment that is safe, supportive and inclusive. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and dignity.

Our values for students, their parents/carers and our staff encompass the *Values for Australian Schooling* and the *National Goals for Schooling in Australia in the Twenty First Century*

- **Care and Compassion** - Caring for self and others
- **Doing Your Best** - Trying hard and pursuing excellence
- **Fair Go** – Treating all people fairly
- **Freedom** - Enjoying all the rights and privileges of Australian citizenship, and standing up for the rights of others
- **Honesty and Trustworthiness** – Being honest and sincere; and seeking the truth
- **Integrity** – Acting in accordance with our values
- **Respect** – Treating others with consideration and regard
- **Responsibility** – Taking responsibility for one's own actions, resolving differences in constructive and peaceful ways, contributing to the school community, and taking care of the environment
- **Understanding, Tolerance and Inclusion** – Being aware of others and their cultures, accepting diversity, being included and including others

Understandings of these shared values were considered when formulating the following statement of 'Expectations and Behaviours' for our *Student Code of Conduct*:

Have a friendly and positive attitude

- Speak politely to everyone
- Always do your best
- Help others
- Welcome and accept everyone
- Show understanding

Be safe

- Sensible behaviours inside and outside
- Walk in corridors and breezeways
- Line up in an orderly way
- Sticks and stones stay on the ground
- Wear hats in Term 1 and Term 4

Be co-operative

- Sharing and taking turns
- Playing fairly
- Include others
- Work quietly so as not to disturb others

Respect each other

- Look at people when they are speaking
- Be fair and honest
- Show patience when waiting for your turn
- Value different opinions

Respect property

- Respect the property of others
- Look after your own belongings
- Clean up after yourself
- Keep our playground and buildings clean and tidy

4. Shared Expectations

Effective schools share high expectations for the whole-school community. Our beliefs as a school are based on our core values of and aspirations for:

Respect for self, each other and the environment demonstrated through honesty, caring, cooperation and fair play.

Integrity in all our actions, evidenced by responsibility and truthfulness.

Optimism characterised by resilience, determination, endeavour, motivation and resoluteness.

Inclusiveness evidenced by encouraging social equity, supporting and valuing diversity.

Students, teachers, principal, assistant principal, support staff, parents and carers agree to understand and share the following expectations for effective engagement to take place.

Expectations for students

Students need to:

- participate in a positive manner,
- ask for assistance when required,
- treat others with respect and dignity,
- support classmates and teachers,
- value and respect school resources.

Expectations for teachers

Teachers need to:

- make sure every student has an equal opportunity to participate and succeed in their learning,
- create a stimulating and enjoyable learning environment in the classroom,
- provide a wide range of resources to engage students,
- listen to students and value their input,
- listen to parents' insights into their children's learning,
- use ICT to maximise the learning and assessment cycle.

Expectations for the principal

The principal needs to:

- provide leadership for staff and students;
- ensure staff, students and the wider community understand school expectations,
- provide resources and equipment to assist teaching and learning,
- ensure curriculum provides for the needs of all students with a range of needs,
- encourage the participation of parents in the school.

Expectations for the assistant principals, student wellbeing and support staff

Assistant principals, student wellbeing and support staff need to:

- ensure that they show understanding and care toward the students and parents they are supporting
- demonstrate the importance of trust and confidentiality
- offer support and advice to students and parents throughout the whole school day.

Expectations for parents/carers

Parents/carers need to

- promote positive educational outcomes for their children by taking an active interest in their child's educational progress,
- cooperate with the school and participate in regular and constructive communication with school staff regarding their child's learning and wellbeing,
- actively support their child's engagement in the school environment.
- support their children and ensure they attend school regularly, are prepared for the day and are on time. It is not 'ok to be away'.
- communicate clearly with the school about the needs of their children, and work with the school to promote positive educational outcomes for them.
- support the school by modelling positive behaviours and assisting their children with their school work.
- cooperate with requests from the school.

5. School actions and consequences

Student engagement, regular attendance and appropriate behaviours are encouraged through the implementation of whole-school strategies supported by targeted and individualised support when required. Actions and consequences are developed in consultation with and agreed on by representatives from the whole-school community, including students. This fosters a cohesive and consistent response to poor attendance and inappropriate behaviour.

These actions and consequences are collectively agreed on, and applied fairly and consistently to increase the likelihood that student connection to school is maintained. A priority is placed on issuing positive consequences for meeting high expectations.

Actions and consequences have an educational role and aim to foster positive relationships and retain the dignity of the student. Actions and consequences that isolate a student from learning are avoided wherever possible.

Student engagement, regular attendance and positive behaviours are supported most effectively through relationship based whole-school and classroom practices, including:

- establishing predictable, fair and democratic classrooms and school environments
- ensuring student participation in the development of classroom and whole-school expectations
- providing personalised learning programs
- consistently acknowledging all students
- empowering students by creating multiple opportunities enabling them to take responsibility and be involved in decision-making
- providing physical environments conducive to positive behaviours and effective engagement in learning
- implementing positive school-wide behaviour support strategies.

Inappropriate behaviours, including irregular attendance, are responded to through a staged response that has a prevention and early intervention, data-based focus, including:

- understanding the student
- ensuring a clear understanding of expectations by both students and teachers
- providing consistent school and classroom environments
- tailoring the student's learning program to their needs.

Broader support strategies include:

- involving and supporting the parents/ carers
- involving the student wellbeing coordinator
- tutoring/peer tutoring
- mentoring and/or counselling
- convening student support group meetings – the student support group is an important component of the staged response for students facing difficulty with engagement, attendance or behaviour
- developing individualised flexible learning, behaviour or attendance plans

Broader support strategies continued:

- providing broader educational programs
- involving community support agencies
- developing school facilities that optimise a culture of engagement.

6. Discipline procedures – suspension and expulsion

Students are encouraged to accept responsibility for their actions, and to participate fully and positively in their educational experience.

Procedures for serious discipline issues

- Student discipline procedures for suspension are in place, in accordance with the DEECD Student Engagement Policy Guidelines, for instances where our early intervention and intervention strategies are not successful, or where an immediate suspension is the only appropriate course of action given the student's behaviour. Suspension is likely to be a consequence for continuous serious misconduct that is dangerous to the health and well being of students and staff.
- In extreme cases the principal may elect to implement expulsion procedures in relation to a student, in accordance with the DEECD Student Engagement Policy Guidelines.

Detailed information to provide further information linked to this policy is available from the DEECD website:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/engagement/default.html>

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