



Student Engagement & Wellbeing Policy

To be read in conjunction with Department of Education & Training & Student Engagement and Inclusion Guidance

1 School Profile Statement

Mountain Gate Primary School is situated in the outer eastern suburb of Ferntree Gully. Established in 1964, the school has a current enrolment of 341 and is expected to be of a similar number over the next few years. The vast majority of students come from the immediate area.

Organised on traditional age groupings with specialist programs conducted in Library, Physical Education, Music and Art/Craft, the school offers a balanced curriculum that caters for the intellectual, social, physical and emotional needs of the child. The school provides experiences for children that promote:

- the desire to learn
- the ability to communicate effectively, through reading, writing, speaking and listening
- a basic understanding of the number system and the ability to use the skills in everyday situations
- an appreciation of art and craft, literature, drama, dance, music and sport
- confidence, a sense of worth, self discipline and independence
- courtesy, friendliness and tolerance towards others
- a sense of civil, social and environmental awareness and responsibility
- the ability to be adaptable and flexible in our ever changing world.

Other features include Tribes, You Can Do It, Kids Matter, Bike Education, Perceptual Motor Program, swimming at all levels, inter-school sport, camps, buddy system, special days to support a strong social service ethic, Junior School Council to provide students a voice in school activities, facility provision and policy development; and computer access at all year levels. The GATEWays programs that we host offer our students as well as those from neighbouring schools, the opportunity for curriculum and thinking enrichment.

Mountain Gate Primary School actively seeks parental involvement in all areas of school life. The school aims to:

- develop a school/community partnership whereby the home supports a caring school environment
- encourage parent interest and participation
- ensure that parents understand their responsibilities in the learning activities of their children.

We are proud of the level of interaction between the school and the community it serves. There is an active School Council and an involved and supportive Parents and Friends Association. The school takes pride in its facilities that are maintained by the combined efforts of the School Council and parent community. A number of volunteer community members provide regular classroom program support and community members and resources are regularly used to enhance curriculum programs and extend student experiences.

We are committed to fully developing the academic, social and personal potential of students, and thus supporting them to become lifelong learners

The catch-cry of "Go Gaters!" drives student involvement, enthusiasm, participation and achievement.



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2. Whole-School Prevention Statement

SCHOOL VISION

Our school vision is *'to actively involve students in inspiring learning experiences so that they embrace their futures as optimistic, contributing members of their local and global communities.'*

Mountain Gate students are citizens of the future..... Gaters are the future!

Student welfare underpins all school programs. When engagement and wellbeing strategies are incorporated into the school ethos and curriculum, students will be more likely to attend school and participate in a meaningful way.

ATTENDANCE

The *Education Act* requires that children of school age (six to sixteen years) resident in Victoria are required to be in full-time attendance at a government or registered non-government school unless they are receiving approved home tuition, correspondence education, or have been granted an exemption by the Regional Director.

Mountain Gate Primary School understands that **full attendance** is a key to engagement and maximises every student's ability to learn and our teachers' ability to teach effectively. The School has actively embraced the **'It's not OK to be away'** approach and ensures that student attendance is monitored effectively and student absences are followed up promptly and consistently.

All students are expected to come to school every day and arrive punctually. If students can't come, they must provide an explanation from their parents/carers, to their teacher. Students should arrive at each class on time and ready to learn. Students are further encouraged via student attendance certificates for 100% attendance per term and year.

Attendance is monitored daily and parents will be contacted by recess for unexplained non-arrival at school.

Extended absenteeism or irregular attendance is responded to through a staged response that has prevention and early intervention as a focus. Attendance focused discussion and meetings with teachers, parents/carers, community agencies and students are held to support, plan and organise consistent attendance.

If deemed necessary intervention at a department regional level will be sought.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Student engagement and wellbeing is encouraged through the implementation of whole school programs, strategies and classroom practice, supported by targeted and individualised support.

These programs and strategies will be implemented through a flexible multi-pronged approach including:

The delivery of a student environment in which they feel safe and supported and where their teachers have high expectations for their learning.

The delivery of fair, respectful and consistent behaviour management systems which ultimately deliver tolerance and respect for all individuals.



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A strong and sequential transition program and practices at the different stages throughout the school, which reduce anxiety and develop resilience and readiness.

The provision of a learning environment that welcomes all parents/carers and is responsive to them as partners in learning, thus ensuring that the unique experiences and skills of their students' families and the community is enriched.

When it is deemed necessary the Assistant Principal/Principal and Class Teachers will work with families and students to implement and coordinate a range of strategies eg. Student Support Group which will enable the early identification of vulnerable students and those at risk of disengagement from school.

All children are taught social skills and attitudes through class lessons and Tribes sessions. This also extends to smaller group activities aimed at increasing engagement, self-esteem and building connectedness to the school and local community

Referral and access to specialized DEECD personnel such as guidance officer, psychologist, speech pathologist, school nurse and social worker will be provided.

The Tribes program has been embedded in practice with all students and teachers belonging to a Tribe. Trust, cooperation and respect are developed and a positive learning community fostered through the 'agreements' of:

- **Attentive Listening**

Acknowledging the person who is speaking – giving full attention and eye contact.

- **Right to Pass**

This encourages students to be self-determining and responsible among peers.

- **Appreciation**

Minimising put-down statements and replacing them with statements of appreciation.

- **Mutual Respect**

Individual cultural values, beliefs and needs will be considered and properly honoured

- **Aim High**

Try to do your best and show pride in your work.

Coupled with Tribes, the **'You Can Do It Program'** provides students with progressive lessons that foster personal development. Lessons are based on the five key foundations of:

- **Persistence**

I will keep on trying.

- **Confidence**

I can do it.

- **Organisation**

I need to take these steps.

- **Getting Along**

I can make friends and be a good friend.

- **Resilience**

I can solve problems.



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Rights and Responsibilities

Guiding principles

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.

Equal Opportunity

The *Equal Opportunity Act 1995* sets out the types or grounds of discrimination that are unlawful and aims to promote community recognition and acceptance of the equality of men and women, and the equality of people of all races, regardless of their religious or political convictions, their impairments or their age. Under the act it is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the basis of the following attributes:

- age
- breastfeeding
- gender identity
- impairment
- industrial activity
- lawful sexual activity
- marital status
- parental status or status as carer
- physical features
- political belief or activity
- pregnancy
- race
- religious belief or activity
- sex
- sexual orientation

The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

The Charter sets out a list of 20 rights that reflect the following four basic principles:

- Freedom
- Respect
- Equality
- Dignity

The charter outlines a vision of human rights for all Victorians. The charter affirms that all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights. While the charter demands equality for all, it also emphasises the value of difference. The charter requires public authorities, including government schools and their employees, to act compatibly with human rights and to consider human rights when making decisions and delivering services.

- The right not to be discriminated against
- The right to privacy and reputation
- The right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief
- Cultural Rights



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All DEECD employees must act compatibly with the Charter and give proper consideration to human rights when making decisions. Everyone should:

- Encourage compliance with the Charter
- Support others to act compatibly with the Charter, and
- Respect and promote human rights

Part of the monitoring of Human Rights will be to complete the Charter Compliance Checklist on the School Compliance web site.

Students with disabilities

The Disability Standards for Education 2005 clarify and make more explicit the obligations on schools and the rights of students under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. The standards cover enrolment, participation, curriculum development, student support services, harassment and victimisation.

An education provider must make 'reasonable adjustments' to accommodate a student with disability. An adjustment is a measure or action taken to assist a student with disability to participate in education and training on the same basis as other students. An adjustment is reasonable if it does this while taking into account the student's learning needs and balancing the interests of all parties affected, including those of the student with the disability, the education provider, staff and other students.

In determining whether an adjustment is reasonable, an education provider should take into account information about:

- the nature of the student's disability
- his or her preferred adjustment
- any adjustments that have been provided previously
- any recommended or alternative adjustments.
- special resources or modifying the curriculum
- costs resulting from the student's participation in the learning environment, including any adverse impact on learning and social outcomes for the student, other students and teachers
- benefits of the student's participation in the learning environment, including positive learning and social outcomes for the student, other students and teachers
- budgetary requirements and access to funding

The DDA and the Education Standards do not require changes to be made if this would impose unjustifiable hardship to a person or organisation.



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Bullying and Harassment

The school will provide a positive culture where bullying is not accepted, and in so doing, all will have the right of respect from others, the right to learn or to teach, and a right to feel safe and secure in their school environment.

Supporting Policies

- ◇ Anti- Bullying/Cyber Bullying
- ◇ Gater Agreements contract
- ◇ IDigital Technologies & Internet Use

Definitions

Harassment is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome or offensive to a person.

Bullying is repeated oppression, physical or psychological, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group.

If a student sees another person being harassed or bullied they should tell the person that you witnessed the incident and advise them to report it to an appropriate person. However, if your friend is harassing another person, let them know that their behaviour is unacceptable.

Bystanders who do nothing to stop bullying may be contributing to the problem by providing an audience for the bully

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying which is carried out through an internet service such as email, chat room, discussion group, online social networking, instant messaging or web pages. It can also include bullying through mobile phone technologies such as SMS. It may involve text or images (photos, drawings)

Cyberbullying can happen to anyone and the bully can act anonymously if they want. People can also be bullied online by groups of people such as class groups or collective members of an online community.

Being involved in online spaces – either at home or at school - requires students to behave responsibly. This includes:

- the language you use and the things you say
- how you treat others
- respecting people's property (eg copyright)
- visiting appropriate places.

Behaving safely online means:

- protecting your own privacy and personal information (we used to call it 'stranger danger')
- selecting appropriate spaces to work and contribute
- protecting the privacy of others (this can be sharing personal information or images)
- being proactive in letting someone know if there is something is 'not quite right'. - at home this would be a parent or carer, at school a teacher.



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Harassment is usually directed at a person because of their gender, race, creed or abilities. It can be subtle or explicit. Extreme forms of sexual harassment may lead to criminal prosecution. All persons have a legal right to protection from harassment under the *Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act and the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act*.

Associated professional learning completed by all employees:

- DEECD Online Workplace Behaviour and Bullying Course
- DEECD Online Workplace Discrimination and Harassment – Legal Compliance

It is important for the school to provide a safe and friendly environment for students and staff and to encourage care, courtesy and respect for others.

The effects of harassment or bullying may include

- poor health – anxiety, depression
- lower self esteem
- reduced study performance
- missed classes, social withdrawal

If you are being harassed or bullied you should:

- Tell the person you don't like what they are doing and you want them to stop.
- Discuss the matter with a student leader or a teacher/coordinator that you feel comfortable with.

Bullying in any form is unacceptable and will not be tolerated at any level, and consequences exist for those who choose to bully others.

Concerns will be taken seriously. All complaints will be treated confidentially.

Rights and Responsibilities of Students, Staff and Parents/Carers

Rights and Responsibilities of Parents/carers

Rights	Responsibilities
Parents/carers have a right to expect that their children will be educated in a secure environment in which care, courtesy and respect for the rights of others are encouraged	Parents/carers have a responsibility to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• promote positive educational outcomes for their children by taking an active interest in their child's educational progress and by modelling positive behaviours.• ensure their child's regular attendance• engage in regular and constructive communication with school staff regarding their child's learning.• support the school in maintaining a safe and respectful learning environment for all students.



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Rights and Responsibilities of Students

Rights	Responsibilities
<p>Students have a right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work in a secure environment where, without intimidation, bullying (including cyber-bullying) or harassment they are able to fully develop their talents, interests and goals. • participate in an environment that is safe, non-threatening and protected from violence – both physical and verbal • participate fully in the school’s educational program 	<p>Students have a responsibility to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participate fully in the school’s educational program and to attend regularly. Students are expected to display positive behaviours that demonstrate respect for themselves, their peers, their teachers and all other members of the school community. • not be physically or verbally abusive/violent towards any member of the school community • develop as individual learners who increasingly manage their own learning and growth by setting goals and managing resources to achieve these goals. <p>*** As students progress through school they will be encouraged and supported to take greater responsibility for their own learning and participation as members of the whole school community.</p>

Rights and Responsibilities of Staff

Rights	Responsibilities
<p>Staff have a right to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expect that they will be able to teach in an orderly, respectful and cooperative environment • feel safe and teach in a non- threatening environment • be informed, within Privacy requirements, about matters relating to students that will affect the teaching and learning program for that student 	<p>Staff have a responsibility to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fairly, reasonably and consistently, implement the engagement policy. • undertake appropriate professional learning • know how students learn and how to teach them effectively. • know the content they teach. • know their students • plan and assess for effective learning. • create and maintain safe and challenging learning environments. • use a range of teaching strategies and resources to engage students in effective learning.



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Shared expectations

Schools – Principals, teachers and school staff

Schools have a responsibility to provide an educational environment that ensures that all students are valued and cared for, feel they are part of the school, and can engage effectively in their learning and experience success.

Mountain Gate Primary School has developed shared expectations to ensure that the learning, safety and rights of all are respected. The expectations are intended to be positive in that they set out what is acceptable and appropriate behaviours for our School community. Our shared expectations are intended to support individual students and families that come to our community from a diversity of backgrounds, communities and experiences.

Values

The school community encourages high standards of behaviour based on cooperation, respect, mutual responsibility and self-discipline and actively promotes harmonious student relationships.

These key values represent the core vision of the school:

- RECOGNITION - recognising talents and differences and celebrating achievement
- RESPONSIBILITY - being accountable for your own actions and words
- RESPECT - having regard for self, others and property
- INTEGRITY - being honest and fair
- OPTIMISM - having a positive outlook

These values will be demonstrated when:

- students have the opportunity to learn in a safe, positive, caring environment that takes into consideration different learning styles.
- students become self-motivated through the provision of relevant curriculum options
- learning and teaching programs support students to develop a range of skills and strategies that enable them to be critical and creative thinkers
- Students are encouraged to work cooperatively and collaboratively with their peers and other members of the school community, and to be proactive and responsible citizens
- every child is encouraged to achieve appropriate mastery of literacy and numeracy skills
- everyone is encouraged to achieve their personal best and show a commitment to improvement in skills and knowledge
- students are expected to take responsibility for their learning and behaviour
- students feel secure in accepting challenges
- diversity enriches our school and is valued and respected
- partnerships between students, staff, parents and the wider community are fostered
- successes and efforts are acknowledged and celebrated.



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Diversity in the school community

The school aims to be inclusive and address diversity by:

- maintaining a highly skilled, motivated and energetic workforce who are better able to meet the needs of a diverse school community
- attracting highly skilled and diverse staff making the school a preferred employer
- increasing the range of knowledge, skills and experiences available in the workforce
- enhancing the capacity for effective decision-making

School actions and consequences

In encouraging and building this cooperative approach it is acknowledged there will be behaviours and events that occur which compromise this ideal.

Actions and consequences should have an educational role and aim to foster positive relationships and retain the dignity of the student. Equal emphasis will be placed on issuing positive consequences for meeting high expectations as there is on negative consequences.

Applying fair and consistent discipline and attendance policies that are agreed on and fairly enforced increases the likelihood that student connection to school is maintained.

Corporal punishment is prohibited in all Victorian Schools.

Corporal punishment must NOT be used at the school

Student engagement, regular attendance, student learning and positive behaviours will be supported through relationship based whole-school and classroom practices, including:

- providing physical environments conducive to positive behaviours and effective engagement in learning
- establishing predictable, fair and democratic classrooms and school environments
- encouraging student participation in the development of classroom and whole school expectations
- all students signing, committing and abiding by whole school Tribes Agreements
- providing personalised learning and behaviour programs where appropriate for individual students
- consistently acknowledging all students and providing positive response/reward when deemed appropriate
- empowering students by creating multiple opportunities for them to take responsibility and be involved in decision-making



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Inappropriate behaviours, including irregular attendance and bullying will be responded to through a staged response, including:

- understanding the student's background and needs
- ensuring a clear understanding of expectations by both students and teachers
- providing consistent school and classroom environments, always referring to our whole school Tribes Agreements
- involving parents/carers
- counselling for individuals in order to modify inappropriate behaviour via class teacher, Assistant Principal, Principal and outside agencies.
- explicit teaching of appropriate behaviours.
- discussing the behaviour problem, expressing apology and reaching an agreement for future behaviour
- initially all behaviour will be dealt with at a classroom level with tiered consequence and notification to parent/carer

Ongoing Behaviour Issues:

Where students exhibit ongoing behaviour patterns as part of a staged response, a broader range of strategies will be used.

These may include:

- discussing the behaviour problem, expressing apology and reaching an agreement for future behaviour
- monitoring and providing feedback
- Time Out allowing students a "Cooling Off" period
- withdrawal of privileges
- withdrawal from class if a student's behaviour significantly interferes with the rights of other students to learn or the capacity of a teacher to teach a class. That student may be temporarily isolated from regular classroom activities or, in more severe cases, required to leave the classroom for a specified period of time. Parents/carers should be informed of such withdrawals.
- **class withdrawal, misconduct or detention note issued**
Detention will be given to a student for serious and/or continual misconduct. (See Effective Schools are Engaging Schools - Student Engagement Policy Guidelines for process required.)
- **convening of a support group** if deemed necessary, involving parents/caregivers and/or relevant DET support staff, external community agencies (See *Department of Education & Training Student Engagement and Inclusion Guidance* for process required).to devise strategies and approaches to address the behaviour.



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Discipline procedures – suspension and expulsion

The new Ministerial Order 625 sets out grounds and procedures for suspensions and expulsions. The Ministerial Order was developed to meet the requirements of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic), that a principal of a government school can only suspend or expel a student in accordance with a Ministerial Order.

When considering suspension or expulsion, schools are required to follow the procedures listed in *Department of Education & Training Student Engagement and Inclusion Guidance* – provide flowcharts and proformas for use in suspension and expulsion procedures.

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/studentengagementguidance.aspx>

Students may only return to school following a return to school conference as per these guidelines.

A student may only be excluded from school in situations where all other measures (see school actions and consequences) have been implemented without success or where an immediate suspension is the only appropriate course of action in response to the student's behaviour.

Principal may suspend a student immediately and prior to convening a Student Support Group meeting if the student behaves in such a way that they are putting the health, safety and wellbeing of themselves or any other person significant risk.

Student wellbeing is integral to the learning process and at Mountain Gate student wellbeing is a priority. The Mountain Gate definition of student wellbeing is a holistic one and encompasses physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development.

Students who are mentally and physically well are optimistic and can engage fully with life. They have a sense of purpose and of self-acceptance, while demonstrating resilience as well as the capacity to form sustained, positive relationships. Research indicates that young people's wellbeing – and hence their ability to learn effectively, is enhanced when they are strongly connected to their school.

References

Student Engagement & Inclusion Guidance	http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/studentengagementguidance.aspx
DE&T Disciplinary Measures	http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/discipline.aspx
School Attendance Guidelines	http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/attendance.aspx
Disability Standards for Education	http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/disability/handbook/legislation.htm
Safe Schools	http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/safety/bullying/default.htm



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	http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/safety/bullying/cyber/default.htm http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/elearningsupportservices/www/default.htm
Charter of Human Rights	http://www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/programs/multicultural/tchrcharter.htm http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_act/cohrara2006433/
Equal Opportunity Act	http://www.det.vic.gov.au/hrweb/divequity/eo/eoact.htm
Education & Training Reform Act 2006	http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/directions/reviewleg.htm
VIT Teacher Code of Conduct	http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/files/documents/1543_Code-of-Conduct-June-2008.pdf

This policy was last updated in March 2018 and is scheduled for review in March 2020