

STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

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.

River Gum 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 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

At River Gum Primary School students own their learning and our teachers use their pedagogical knowledge to personalise learning. We value community, relationship and reflection. Our core values are Respect, Equality, Inclusion and Excellence and our school motto is "Together we can ... For every child, every day in every classroom".

River Gum Primary School is located South East of Melbourne in the City of Casey. For more than 30 years the school has served its local community in the long established suburb of Hampton Park which is positioned adjacent to the rapidly emerging South East corridor. Over recent years, it has been, and continues to be, a community undergoing demographic



change. In 2018 the schools enrolments decreased from 530 in August 2017 to 520 in February 2018. Increasing mobility saw our enrolments increasing up to 560 during the 2018 school year and the potential to impede student learning outcomes and is a challenge the school faces. We had 101 students enroll after census and 61 exit the school. State Government (DET) additional needs based funding has been allocated to our school in 2018. In 2018 we had 30 funded students on the PSD program.

Student enrolments are drawn from the local community and reflect the changing demographics of Hampton Park in terms of socio economic indicators and families from a non-English speaking background.

Currently 80% of the enrolled students are from a non-English speaking background; this represents an increase of 24.0% over the past 4 years. 44 different languages are spoken in the homes of River Gum Primary School students; Dari, Hindi and Khmer being the languages students are predominantly immersed in. Of the non-English speaking background cohort, only 48% of students come from homes where English is spoken as the first language.

River Gum Primary School is in a stable period of strong, dedicated and professional leadership which has brought about significant change in school climate over recent years. In 2018 a number of new staff have joined our school this year and our Staff Profile indicates that 20 out of 26 classrooms teachers have 7 years or less of teaching experience.

There is a culture of distributive leadership with students at the centre of all conversations, decisions and allocation of resources. There is a commitment to building leadership capacity at all levels within the school and an emphasis on individual and collective accountability. In addition to the Principal, the school currently has an Assistant Principal, two Leading Teachers, three Learning Specialists and one co-ordinator of Intervention and Extension who each work consultatively with teams, including the School Improvement Team, to further the achievement, wellbeing and engagement of students and progress the school's strategic direction. There is a pervading commitment to professional growth and personal accountability within the staff. Their agreed intention is encapsulated in their motto "A culture of trust through collaboration and communication within a supportive and professional setting".

All teaching staff are members of a Professional Learning Community and work collectively to develop curriculum and analyse data to ensure work is at an appropriate level for all students.

In 2018 our agreed curriculum approaches were embedded through a whole school Instructional Model. All teachers followed this structured approach within their lesson planning: beginning of the lesson, explicit teaching, followed by guided & independent practice and then a review of the lesson. A whole school approach to the teaching of Reading and Writing is based on the BASTOW leading Literacy course and our school consultant Lisa Keskinen's literacy approach. Students participate in a daily Readers and Writers workshop. The strategies fundamental to these approaches have assisted teachers in the implementation of personalised learning through differentiation. The Big Ideas in Number has increased



teachers' knowledge and skills so that this discipline is now personalised for students in all classes.

Our key focus for Wellbeing began in 2017 when we introduced our Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). Following extensive research we formed an official partnership with The Resilience Project, an evidence based SEL program aimed at promoting positive mental health, and teaching practical strategies to build resilience.

The development of a diverse suite of specialist classes designed to offer new and varied experiences is successfully engaging for many students. Music, Performing Arts, Visual Arts, Digital Technologies and Kitchen Garden deliver diversity whilst focusing on developing Reading, Speaking and Listening and Writing competencies. The school takes great pride in the large array of specialist programs offered to our students from Foundation to Year 6. The diversity of programs offered is showcased at the River Gum Performing Arts Centre, our 500 seat theatre; at whole school assemblies held twice per term.

Student Voice, by way of a student leadership group has had the desired effect of enhancing student centred learning. The team of student leaders are very active within the school. Teams of students are active participants in growing school pride, by confidently communicating their desire to grow learner agency with their teachers. In the area of student led learning, Student Voice leaders were involved in weekly workshops and student led meetings, with a range of students from year 3-6. Students worked in teams linked to the Annual Implementation Plan under Achievement, Engagement and Wellbeing. Each group developed goals and action plans, focused on achieving a particular outcome, this was presented to the staff in PD where the students would 'teach the teachers'.

The school recognises the importance of research based frameworks for the design and delivery of learning and that consistent and universal application are pivotal in preparing River Gum students for the 21st century. It has an excellent foundation on which to build as it faces the challenges of fully engaging its diverse community in the education partnership and embedding a culture of consistency of practice as the platform for transforming the learning culture and ethos into one of high expectations for all students.

The school recognized the importance of research based frameworks for the design and delivery of all aspects of teaching and learning. The consistent and universal application of the curriculum was pivotal in preparing River Gum Primary School students for the 21st century. River Gum Primary School had an excellent foundation on which to build from as it faced the challenges of full engagement from its diverse community in the education partnership.

A culture of consistency in teacher practice and high expectations for all students created the platform for transforming the learning culture and ethos throughout 2017. Staff Performance Plans were developed using the AITSL standards, supported by the Classroom Practice Continuum and were directly related to the 2017 AIP goals. Peer to Peer observations were used as a means of improving teacher capacity through feedback. In 2017 River Gum Primary School continued to provide intervention strategies through the Students With



Additional Needs program (SWAN). This program was significantly resourced by experienced teaching staff who impacted positively on student learning outcomes.

2. School Values, Philosophy and Vision

At River Gum Primary School we embrace high expectations for both students and teachers in everything we do.

This is captured in our school vision-

“At River Gum our students own their learning and our teachers use their pedagogical knowledge to personalise learning. We value community relationships and reflection. Our community builds the foundations of River Gum Primary School”.

Our school community is a partner for focused learning where **“Together we can for every child every day”** build the culture of life-long learning through the many engaging programs we offer.

The school is at the forefront of pedagogical innovation by implementing school-wide changes through reshaping curriculum, creating a culture of continuous assessment and self-improvement, and engaging parents in our school community. Our teachers and students design engaging, developmentally appropriate learning activities that value and respect the individuality of each child and their different learning needs. The teaching and learning environment is supportive and productive through building positive relationships through knowing each student.

We have created a community of learners where students are expected to own their own learning and teachers are expected to make the learning relevant and applicable for each student.

River Gum Primary School has developed a range of strategies to promote engagement, positive behaviour and respectful relationships for all students in our school. 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

- 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
- 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
- teachers at River Gum Primary School use an 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 River Gum 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
- 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 have the opportunity to contribute to and provide feedback on decisions about school operations through Student Leadership and Agency including other forums such as class representatives. Students are also encouraged to speak with their teacher and Year Level Coordinator.
- All students are welcome to self-refer to the Student Wellbeing Coordinator, Year Group Leaders, Assistant Principal and Principal if they would like to discuss a particular issue or feel as though they may need support of any kind. We are proud to have an ‘open door’ policy where students and staff are partners in learning
- we engage in school wide positive behaviour support with our staff and students, which includes programs such as:
 - Respectful Relationships
 - Resilience project
 - Relationships and sexuality health
- opportunities for student inclusion (i.e. sports teams, clubs, recess and lunchtime activities)

Targeted

- each year group has a Year Group Leader/Coordinator, a senior teacher responsible for their year, 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
- connect all Koorie students with a Koorie Engagement Support Officer
- all students in Out of Home Care will be appointed a Learning Mentor, have an Individual Learning Plan and will be referred to Student Support Services for an Educational Needs Assessment
- staff will apply a trauma-informed approach to working with students who have experienced trauma



Individual

- Individual Learning Plan and Behaviour Support Plan
- Program for Students with Disabilities
- referral to Student Welfare Coordinator and Student Support Services
- referral to ChildFirst, Headspace
- Resilience project

School implements a range of strategies that support and promote individual engagement. 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

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
- running regular Student Support Group meetings for all students:
 - with a disability
 - in Out of Home Care
 - and with other complex needs that require ongoing support and monitoring.

3. Identifying students in need of support

River Gum PS 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. Example 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

4. 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, 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.

5. Student behavioural expectations

Behavioural expectations of students, staff and families are grounded in our school's Statement of Values. Student bullying behaviour will be responded to consistently with River Gum PS Bullying policy.

When a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our school community, River Gum PS will institute a staged response, consistent with the Department's Student Engagement and



Inclusion Guidelines. Where appropriate, parents will be informed about the inappropriate behaviour and the disciplinary action taken by teachers and other school staff.

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
- behaviour reviews
- suspension
- expulsion

Suspension and expulsion are measures of last resort and may only be used in particular situations consistent with Department policy, available at:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/participation/pages/engagement.aspx>

Corporal punishment is prohibited in our school and will not be used in any circumstance.

6. Engaging with families

River Gum PS 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 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.



7. Evaluation

River Gum 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 survey
- case management
- CASES21
- SOCS

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

[River Gum Primary School Website: Policies](#)

- Anti-Bulling
- Camps and Excursions
- Child Safe Standards (Policy & Code of Conduct)
- Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations
- Inclusion and Diversity
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement

REVIEW CYCLE

PREPARED BY	PHILIP O'REILLY & LYN HEMPEL
REVIEWED IN	APRIL 2019
REVIEWED BY STAFF	APRIL 2019
REVIEWED BY C.C	APRIL 2019
REVIEWED & RATIFIED BY SCHOOL COUNCIL	APRIL 2019
NEXT REVIEW DATE	APRIL 2021

