

# WELLBEING POLICY



## PURPOSE

Newmark Primary (the school) is committed to the care, safety and wellbeing of all students. This policy sets out the school's approach to the holistic development of students, and the expectations of staff, parents/carers and students in creating a culture of respect and inclusion.

The school embraces diversity, with particular attention given to the inclusion of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Harmful behaviour which targets students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our school, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

This policy outlines the steps that will be taken to redirect students when there is a breach of the school's values and cultural norms.

## PRINCIPLES

- The school and its staff have a duty of care towards students.
- The school provides a safe environment where the risk of harm is minimised and students feel secure.
- The school's culture prioritises the wellbeing of students in line with the school's philosophy, and not just for reasons of compliance.
- The school and its staff are committed to the wellbeing of students in the knowledge that a student's happiness and feeling of security are fundamental to their learning and growth.
- The school provides for the mental, social, emotional and physical development of students. It takes a positive approach to student wellbeing through the integration of school-wide programs.
- All staff members are aware of the importance of student wellbeing and of their obligations under the relevant state and commonwealth laws.
- In discharging its duty of care, the school is committed to take account of the diversity of all students, including the needs of Aboriginal children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable.
- The school does not permit corporal punishment.

## AIMS

- To support the school and its staff, parents/carers and students in creating a safe, positive and inclusive learning environment.
- To create a shared understanding of the school's approach to the holistic development of students.

- To clearly set out the school's response when there is a breach of the school's values and cultural norms.

## LEGAL AND REGULATORY BASIS FOR COMPLIANCE

- Duty of Care
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic.)
- Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic.)
- Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority Minimum Standards
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.)
- Ministerial Order No 1359
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cth)
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Multicultural Victoria Act 2011 (Vic)
- Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 (Vic)
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)

## SCOPE

This policy applies to members of the school board, the principal, school staff, parents/carers, volunteers, contracted service providers, visitors and students. The policy applies in the following situations:

- during the school day;
- during outings and camps;
- during school events held outside normal school hours; and
- during meetings sanctioned by the school.

## KEY DEFINITIONS

**Duty of care:** The term 'duty of care' falls within the law of negligence where, in this context, negligence means either a negligent act or the omission of reasonable steps to prevent harm.

Principals and teachers are held to a higher standard of care in relation to students than non-teaching staff and the general public. The duty requires principals and teachers to take steps to minimise the risk of reasonably foreseeable harm. This means that the school, the principal and teachers must anticipate risks for students and take action and care to prevent them from coming to harm. Harm may include not only physical harm but also psychological distress or mental harm. The duty of care is non-delegable, meaning that it cannot be assigned to another party.

Non-teaching staff members do not have the same extensive duty of care that teachers have, but they are still required to exercise due care and skill. When non-teaching staff members, volunteers and external providers agree to perform tasks that involve them in care and/or direct responsibility for students that they have a duty to take such measures as are reasonable in the circumstances to protect students from risks of harm that reasonably ought to be foreseen.

**Suspend/Expel:** The principal has the authority to suspend or expel a student if the seriousness of the behaviour warrants this level of response. A suspension means the student is removed

from the school for a set period of time. An expulsion means the student is permanently removed from the school.

## UNDERLYING THEORIES AND PRINCIPLES OF WELLBEING

**Restorative Practice:** The school's approach to wellbeing is informed by Restorative Practice. Restorative Practice recognises that people have an innate desire to connect with others, that just as we need food, shelter and clothing we also need respectful and meaningful relationships to thrive. Restorative Practices aim to strengthen relationships between individuals and between communities, giving people a feeling of being safe and belonging.

Restorative practice also demonstrates how to improve and repair relationships between people and communities. The purpose is to build healthy communities, repair harm and restore relationships. The rationale behind this approach is, when students reflect upon the harm caused to others they become remorseful and act restoratively. This can lead to healthier interpersonal relations and more effective learning.

**Emotion Coaching:** The school's approach to wellbeing is informed by Emotion Coaching (Gottman Institute) and supported by an understanding of Emotional Intelligence (Daniel Goleman). This approach equips children to express, interpret and manage emotions.

**Attachment Theory:** The school's approach to wellbeing is informed by the Attachment Theory which suggests that the relationships children form when young, can influence their brain development. It also suggests that when children feel safe with primary carers, a secure base is created for the child to then explore the world.

**Growth Mindset:** The school's approach to wellbeing is informed by Growth Mindset principles. The school does not believe in, or use external rewards as extrinsic motivation to encourage character development. Rather the school is committed to embedding a growth mindset in students, whereby they understand the benefit of character strengths, can set goals to develop character and are aware of their growth. The school believes that this creates intrinsic motivation and a love of learning.

**Non-Violent Communication:** The school's approach to wellbeing is informed by non-violent communication:

- Observations: When I see, hear, experience...
- Feelings: I feel ...
- Needs: Because I need, value, care about...
- Request: Would you be willing ...

**Wellbeing Principles:** The school is informed by key principles as is evident across various wellbeing theories. These include:

- having a sense of purpose and meaning;
- being connected with others;
- helping others;
- being self-aware;
- learning and growing; and
- being active.

## SCHOOL VALUES AND CULTURE

### School Values

The school values are the foundation of the school's culture, and directly impact the character development of students. The values are embedded in the daily practices of the school and set clear expectations of how to interact, communicate and work together. Having a shared understanding of, and commitment to the school values, creates an environment where students feel safe and can thrive.

The school values are:

**Make Someone's Day (kindness):** We build each other up, and use acts of kindness to spread joy, drive change and create a safe space for everyone.

**Better Together (collaboration):** We champion collaboration within communities in order to reach a common good.

**Find A Way (courage):** We value bravery. We aren't afraid to get stuck in and to build and pioneer new ways of doing things.

**Know Your Impact (empathy):** We see the perspective of others. We listen and take a moment to consider the impact of our words and actions.

**Go Beyond (generosity):** We make time for others and go beyond what is expected, putting positive contribution at the heart of everything we do.

**Keep It Real (authenticity):** We don't shy away from what is real. We value genuine connections and experiences, and we seek them out.

### School Cultural Norms

Building on the school values, the school sets out cultural norms to provide further guidance for interactions and communication. It is the expectation of the school, that all community members and workers, abide by these cultural norms to create a safe, inclusive and respectful environment.

#### Be respectful

We show respect to people, resources and the environment. The words and actions we choose to use when interacting with others (both in the physical and cyber world) should cause no intentional harm. We use non-violent communication strategies to have constructive conversations without attacking, accusing or manipulating others. We acknowledge, accept and celebrate differences. We take care of resources, showing gratitude for what we have, and our actions show that we care about the environment.

#### Be empathetic

We seek to understand the perspective and feelings of others, and use this understanding to shape the way we communicate and act. We don't assume to know what others think and feel, but we actively pursue understanding through asking questions and listening to others.

#### Be aware of impact

We consider our impact on other people and on the environment. We carefully think about the impact that our words and actions may have on other people BEFORE we speak or act. We

consider how our message may cause another person to feel, and whether it is absolutely necessary to share our thoughts and feelings if they might negatively impact or disrupt others. We seek to encourage one another in order to create a safe and respectful environment. We are aware of how our actions impact the natural and man-made environment around us.

#### Be solution focused

We understand that talking constantly about problems breeds a toxic and unproductive culture. So we aim to not get stuck in the problem, but rather move quickly into finding solutions. We avoid communicating when we are experiencing a flood of emotions, with the intention of engaging in constructive and respectful conversations once emotions have settled.

#### Acknowledge mistakes

We acknowledge when our words or actions have caused harm to other people, resources or the environment. We seek to restore and reconcile damage done to people, resources and the environment.

#### Make reasonable requests

We do not make demands of other people, but rather engage in constructive and respectful conversation about possible solutions to problems. We understand what we have influence over, and what we don't and we respect those boundaries. We consider reasonable requests that are made in respectful ways.

#### Be an advocate

We champion the school, its philosophy and its mission. We act as advocates of the school in all circumstances. We are conscious of how our words and actions impact the school's reputation and mission when communicating with others in person, through social media, through written text and through other forms of media.

## WELLBEING INITIATIVES

The school implements a range of wellbeing initiatives to encourage the holistic development of students, with a particular focus on social and emotional development. We support and foster meaningful relationships, self-realisation and belonging. These initiatives empower students to participate in decision-making, contribute to the community, take initiative and voice opinions. These initiatives include, but are not limited to:

**Morning Huddle:** A community gathering where children decide what they need to get ready for their day. Each morning they opt-in to an activity that will help them calm emotions, connect with others and/or move their bodies. During the community meeting, we focus on a school value or character trait each week, celebrate milestones and move our bodies.

**Campfire Conversations:** A small group, circle time conversation where students share how they are feeling, connect with peers, unpack school values and discuss relevant issues. This occurs each morning in learning studios.

**Reflect and Reset:** A time set aside during the day to encourage students to reflect on goals and growth, and to contribute to taking care of their environment.

**Socratic Circles:** A mixed-aged group discussion about relevant issues and topics. Classes select two representatives to share their views on the issue/topic and members of the leadership team meet with them, listen to their ideas and use this to inform future decisions.

**Emotion Coaching:** A program where teachers meet with students 1:1 to set goals and encourage development in:

- understanding and expressing emotions;
- connecting emotions to sensations;
- perceiving and interpreting the emotions of others;
- managing emotions;
- understanding how emotions lead to actions; and
- understanding how emotions impact relationships.

**Crews:** Multi-aged groups run by Year 6 students to develop meaningful relationships across year levels, and a greater sense of belonging.

**Outdoor Education (including sport and camps):** A comprehensive Outdoor Education program is provided for students with opportunities to develop essential character strengths such as resilience, perseverance, problem-solving and courage. Students opt-in a sport they will enjoy each term. The Outdoor Education program includes activities such as: bike ed, hiking, sailing, skateboarding, hard-top camping and journey-based camping.

**Opt-In Workshops:** A skill-based, interest-driven program run by experts in the school (e.g. artist, wooderer) Students opt-in to workshops that they are passionate about to deep dive into greater understanding and skill development.

**Project Ventures:** Term long unit which incorporates aspects of social and emotional learning (e.g. emotional regulation, diversity, healthy bodies, decision making, relationships etc). All Project Ventures are built on key wellbeing principles such as: connecting to other people; making a positive contribution; being physically, mentally, emotionally and socially well.

**Goal Grids:** A whole-school approach to teaching and learning where student data is used to set differentiated stretch goals. Goals are shared with students and they are supported in gathering evidence to show growth. As a part of this system, the school has developed statements that encourage students to apply effort and perseverance to grow towards their goals. The school holds the belief that when students see their own growth, they are intrinsically motivated to keep learning and develop a love of learning. On this basis, the school does not use any external, reward-based systems.

## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

### Cultural Diversity

The school takes seriously the importance of creating a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal students and families, as well as those from other culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The school aims to provide a safe, respectful and inclusive environment where students:

- feel comfortable being themselves;
- feel comfortable expressing their culture, including their spiritual and belief systems;

- are supported by carers who respect their cultural backgrounds and encourage their sense of self, identity and belonging;
- are provided with adjusted learning programs based on an EAL curriculum; and
- are invited to share about their culturally diverse backgrounds as part of teaching and learning programs.

The school gives particular attention to the inclusion of Aboriginal students and families, understanding the rich history and contribution of Australia's First Nation people. The school:

- incorporates Acknowledgement of Country;
- engages with local elders and organisations;
- incorporates Aboriginal perspectives into the teaching and learning program;
- seeks to collaborate with Aboriginal communities across Australia as part of the teaching and learning program;
- seeks support, and incorporates Aboriginal perspective of the natural world in the Outdoor Education program; and
- recognises and embraces important occasions (eg Sorry Day and Reconciliation Week).

### **Disability**

The school understands the importance of creating a safe, nurturing and inclusive environment for students with a disability, and the obligation to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate for the diverse needs of these students. The school:

- engages and collaborates with professionals and experts to better understand the needs of students;
- attains external reports and uses the recommendations to create reasonable adjustments to the program;
- plans and implements individual Adjustment Plans in consultation with parents/carers;
- implements an Intervention Program to support academic development;
- develops an understanding of disability through the teaching and learning program;
- makes adjustments to the physical environment to cater for needs of students with a disability;
- provides additional support and resources according to the needs of students with a disability; and
- trains staff to recognise and better understand a variety of disabilities.

### **Gender Diversity**

The school recognises the importance of creating a safe, nurturing and inclusive environment for students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+). The school:

- makes adjustments to the physical environment to accommodate for individual needs;
- develops an understanding of gender diversity through the teaching and learning program, in age appropriate ways;
- makes adjustments to use of language to accommodate for the diversity of students (eg use of personal pronouns; use of gender specific language and management strategies);
- secures support from external organisations and health professionals when required;
- creates trusting and respectful relationships between staff and students, providing opportunities to share; and

- communicates and consults with parents/carers.

### **Vulnerability**

The school recognises the importance of creating a safe, nurturing and inclusive environment for students who are considered vulnerable due to traumatic family circumstances. The school:

- engages and collaborates with relevant organisations/services and health professionals;
- creates and/or participates in care teams which can include staff, parents/carers, health professionals and workers from relevant organisations / services;
- creates an Adjustment Plan or Wellbeing Plan (depending on the needs of the student) in consultation with parents/carers; and
- trains staff to better understand how to create a safe environment for vulnerable students (eg attachment theory, restorative practice, emotion coaching).

### **BREACH OF VALUES AND CULTURAL NORMS**

In cases where the school values and cultural norms are breached, staff will support all students involved to restore relationships. Through a process of reflection, redirection and increased accountability, students will have the opportunity to make decisions that contribute to a safe, respectful and inclusive environment.

#### **Redirect**

When a breach occurs, staff will talk with the student/s involved to raise awareness of the impact of their words and actions and redirect through reminding of school values and cultural norms.

#### **Reflect**

If there is no change in behaviour, staff will provide the student/s with a quiet, supervised place and a reflective tool. The reflective tool will encourage the student/s to consider:

- What was I feeling right before I acted?
- What might have made me feel that way?
- What did I do?
- How did my actions impact other people?
- How might they be feeling?
- What do I need to do to restore relationships?
- What can I do differently next time?

#### **Restore**

Staff will talk with the student/s about the reflection, establish agreed behaviour and facilitate conversations to restore relationships. In the case where a group of students are involved / impacted, staff will use the principles of Restorative Practice to facilitate a conversation and form an agreement. Staff will check in with student/s at set times to ensure agreed behaviour is being followed.

The reflections and agreements will be securely stored and incidents will be noted in the Student Incident record keeping system.



## **Consult**

If there is no change in behaviour and a pattern of harmful behaviour is observed and recorded, staff will consult with parents/carers. This will include:

- arranging a meeting as soon as practicable;
- discussing emerging pattern of behaviour;
- considering possible triggers; and
- discussing possible increased support.

Following this consultation, staff will draft a plan of action which will be shared with parents/carers and implemented. Consultation will continue with parents/carers until all are satisfied that observable change has occurred.

The meeting minutes and plan will be securely stored and noted in the Student Incident record keeping system.

## **Consequences**

The school will use appropriate consequences to encourage a change in behaviour. Wherever possible the consequences will support positive contribution (e.g. if a student damages the property of others, they may be asked to assist in restoring or cleaning property).

The implementation of consequences will generally take place during a playtime, so the impact on learning time is minimal and student privacy is protected.

In some cases, when behaviour is causing high levels of harm the most appropriate consequence will be to remove the student/s from the situation. The school may choose to keep the student/s away from others if there is a reasonable belief that the student/s may cause further harm. At times, the school may request for the student/s to be picked up as soon as practicable.

## **Suspension and Expulsion**

In extreme cases of misconduct, the school may engage in an urgent escalation plan. The principal has the authority to suspend or expel a student/s if the misconduct warrants such a response from the school in order to maintain a safe and respectful environment. Misconduct that might warrant immediate and urgent escalation could include:

- bullying (verbal, physical, social, cyberbullying);
- discrimination;
- racism;
- intimidation;
- violence towards others;
- drug use; and/or
- sexual misconduct.

The school will consider the following in light of the misconduct prior to making a final decision:

- the misconduct for which the student is being suspended or expelled;
- the educational needs of the student;
- any disability of the student;
- the age of the student; and

- the family circumstances of the student.

The school will request a meeting to be held as soon as practicable, as follows:

- The meeting will include the principal, staff members involved in the incident, the student, and parents/carers.
- The meeting will include:
  - an explanation of the misconduct; and
  - an opportunity for all attending to voice their point of view.
- The school will consider the misconduct and the points of view expressed by attendees prior to making a final decision. The school will share a final decision with the parents/carer and student as soon as possible, ideally prior to the next school day.
- A record will be kept of the meeting including a description of the misconduct, the discussion during the meeting and the final decision. The record will be kept secure and confidentiality will be maintained. The parents/carers will be given a copy of the record.
- The board will be made aware of the outcome via email, and will be kept informed of the future developments.
- If parents/carers wish to appeal the decision, they can use the procedure outlined in the Concerns and Complaints Policy.

If the principal decides to suspend the student, the school will:

- provide a clear time frame of the length of suspension;
- provide a learning plan for the student to complete at home;
- plan a re-entry meeting with the parents/carers and the student prior to returning to school. This meeting will include:
  - consultation of a plan with clear goals to be implemented on return to school; and
  - scheduling of frequent communications between the school and the home for a set period of time to monitor and support the student.

In rare cases, the school may decide to suspend the student if further time is required for the school to thoroughly investigate the circumstances, pending a decision to expel the student.

If the principal decides to expel a student, the school will do all it can to support the student and parents/carers during the transition to another school.

If the behaviour of parents/carers is causing repeated harm, damage or danger to staff or students, this creates reasonable grounds for the school to consider removal of the family. This decision will be made in consultation with the school board.

The school will keep a register of all suspensions and expulsions, along with records of meetings and decisions, respecting the privacy of all involved.

## **Support**

The school will take action to ensure students impacted by harmful and dangerous behaviour are supported. This may include, but is not limited to:

- ensuring the student/s have an opportunity to share their perspective and how they are feeling;
- putting measures in place to ensure the student/s feel safe in the environment;
- informing parents/carers, if necessary; and

- seeking outside support from health professionals, if required.

## RELATED POLICIES

- Child Safety Policy
- Reporting Obligations Policy
- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Technology Policy
- Supervision Policy
- Outings, Camps and Events Policy
- Volunteers Policy
- Contractors and Visitors Policy
- Concerns and Complaints Policy

## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Volunteers Code of Conduct

## POLICY REVIEW

The school board and principal will review the Wellbeing Policy every second year, or following a major incident. The review will include input from the school community including staff, students and parents/carers.

## ENDORSEMENT

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| <b>Updated date</b> | April 2023   |
| <b>Consultation</b> | School staff, student representative group, representative parent/carers group, school board |
| <b>Endorsed by</b>  | School Board   |
| <b>Endorsed on</b>  | May 2023   |