STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

	Help for non-English speakers
Interpreter	If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact the School by telephoning 03 9376 1622.

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all students and members of the Mount Alexander College community understand:

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

Mount Alexander College is committed to providing a safe, secure and stimulating learning environment for all students. We understand that students reach their full potential only when they are happy, healthy and safe and that a positive school culture, where student participation is encouraged and valued, helps to engage students and support them in their learning. Our school acknowledges that student wellbeing and student learning outcomes are closely linked.

The objective of this policy is to support our school to create and maintain a safe, supportive and inclusive school environment consistent with our school's values.

2. DEFINITIONS

- **Student Wellbeing** - a sustainable positive mood and attitude, health, resilience, and satisfaction with self, relationships and experiences at school (Victorian DEECD definition).
- **Engagement** - a sense of connection with what you are doing or where you are; a sense of belonging. (NSW Government definition)

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions.

4. POLICY

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(a) School profile

Mount Alexander College was established in 1858. It is a Year 7 to 12 co-educational school located in Flemington and the City of Moonee Valley. It is approximately 6 kilometres north of Melbourne CBD. In 2022 the College has an enrolment of 630 and the staffing profile consists of 2 Principal Class, 45 teaching staff, 21 Education Support staff including a Student Wellbeing Coordinator, 2 Mental Health Practitioners, Youth Worker, School Nurse and Doctor (funded through the Doctors in Secondary Schools program).

The student cohort is comprised of:

- 48.35% with parents are born overseas
- 20.1% being born overseas
- 23% come from a disadvantaged background
- 36% have a disability
- 1.74% are refugees
- 1.1% have an indigenous background
- 2% are International Students

We are proud of our diversity and inclusive school community. We strive to provide a nurturing and challenging environment that empowers students to reach their personal best, both academically and socially.

(b) School values, philosophy and vision

Mount Alexander College recently transformed into a student-centred school, with a focus on authentic student empowerment. Mount Alexander College caters for the diverse needs of all students, preparing them to be adaptable, curious lifelong learners who are able to contribute and succeed in the digital age.

At Mount Alexander College, learning occurs in a safe, positive, vibrant, well-connected and dynamic context that engages and empowers students to achieve their potential. This is underpinned by respectful relationships and a commitment to impartiality and equity.

Students are known at Mount Alexander. They are warmly welcomed into our caring community through a comprehensive induction program. Pastoral care and wellbeing is addressed through the House Mentoring Program and daily classroom teacher and Heads of House observations.

Our vertical curriculum structure allows students to select subjects that they are passionate about regardless of their year level. This makes it possible for a Year 8 student to undertake a Pre VCE or VCE subject. Each student's individual learning plan is developed in consultation with course counsellors and parents. Our ethos of student voice-based teaching and learning ensures students are active participants in the construction of subjects offered. While complying with mandated content to meet VCAA and VET requirements, options that coincide with students' passions and interests are still accommodated. This makes for well engaged, passionate learners who look forward to school every day. It is also contributing to our rapidly increasing enrolments.

Continuous reporting via Compass enables parents/carers to keep well informed about student learning progress. Teachers provide reports every six weeks using software that graphs achievement in each subject over the year. Access to the best technology for each learning task is provided through the Bring Your Own Device program. We intend to work actively with the local community and be seen as the school of choice in the area for providing an education that is accessible and equal for all; a core tenant of public education. On a system level, we intend to foster communities of collaboration and cooperation rather than competition.

Mount Alexander College's Statement of Values and School Philosophy is integral to the work that we do and is the foundation of our school community. Students, staff and members of our school community are encouraged to live and demonstrate our core values of respect, integrity and kindness at every opportunity.

Our school's vision is to empower students to reach their personal best and fully equip them to contribute positively to society as happy, healthy young adults.

(c) Wellbeing and engagement strategies

Mount Alexander College has developed a range of strategies to promote engagement, an inclusive and safe environment, positive behaviour and respectful relationships for all students in our school. We recognise the importance of student friendships and peer support in helping children and students feel safe and less isolated 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, targeted and individual engagement strategies used by our school is included as follows.

<u>Universal</u>

- High and consistent expectations of all staff, students and parents and carers.
- Prioritising positive relationships between staff and students, and recognising the fundamental role this plays in building and sustaining student wellbeing.
- Creating a culture that is inclusive, engaging and supportive and that embraces and celebrates diversity and empowers all students to participate and feel valued.
- Welcoming to 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/carer survey data, student management data and school level assessment data.
- Delivery of a broad curriculum including VET program and VCE to ensure that students are able to choose subjects and programs that are tailored to their interests, strengths and aspirations.
- Teachers at Mount Alexander College use Jane Pollock's GANAG 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 Mount Alexander College adopt a broad range of teaching and assessment approaches to effectively respond to the diverse learning styles, strengths and needs of our students and follow the standards set by the Victorian Institute of Teaching.
- Our school's *Statement of Values and School Philosophy* are incorporated into our curriculum and promoted to students, staff and parents so that they are shared and celebrated as the foundation of our school community.
- Carefully planned transition programs to support students moving into different stages of their schooling.
- Positive behaviour and student achievement is acknowledged in the classroom and formally in school assemblies and in communication to parents/carers.
- Monitoring of student attendance and implementing 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 the Student Representative Council and other forums including year group meetings and Peer Support Groups. Students are also encouraged to speak with their teachers, Year Level Coordinator, Assistant Principal and Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns.
- Create opportunities for cross-age connections amongst students through performing arts and music programs, sporting carnivals, house mentoring program and house activities.
- All students are welcome to self-refer to the Student Wellbeing Coordinator, Youth Worker, Mental Health Practitioner, Head of House, Leading Teacher Student Engagement and Wellbeing, 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,
  - School TV,
  - Wellbeing workshops, and
  - Sexual Health and Consent workshops.
- Programs, incursions and excursions developed to address issue specific needs or behaviour (e.g. Social Skills Workshop, Project Rockit).
- Opportunities for student inclusion (e.g. sports teams, clubs, recess and lunchtime activities).
- Buddy programs, peers support programs.
- Measures are in place to empower our school community to identify, report and address inappropriate and harmful behaviours such as racism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination or harassment.

<u>Targeted</u>

- A student-centred curriculum combined with a common approach to teaching and learning strategies are implemented to address individual student engagement.

- All students have an Individual Education Plan.

- Students are given multiple opportunities for student responsibility and involvement in decision making.

- A School Wide Positive Behaviours Program is implemented across the school with an agreed Expectations Matrix outlining expected behaviour.

- Student welfare programs will explicitly teach the school's Expectations Matrix for student behaviour.

- The focus of behaviour management is based on the "Are you ready to learn?" principle.

- A consistent set of consequences is agreed to for breaches of the Behaviour Expectations.

- A restorative approach to behaviour management focuses on the behaviour rather than the student.

- A vertical House system delivers pastoral care and opportunities for student leadership through extension activities.

- Parents/Carers are actively encouraged to participate in their child's education.

- Individual specialist support and interventions are provided to students with special needs and for students at risk of disengagement.

- There is ongoing collection of data and evaluation of behaviour and attendance trends drives adjustments to programs.

- All students are assigned to a House and House mentor group. Each student is assigned a Mentor Teacher and Head of House who monitors the health and wellbeing of students assigned to them, and acts as a point of contact for students who may need additional support.

- Koorie students are supported to engage fully in their education, in a positive learning environment that understands and appreciates the strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture – refer to the School's *Inclusion and Diversity Policy*.

- The school's English as an Additional Language students are supported through our EAL program, and all cultural and linguistically diverse students are supported to feel safe and included in our school including through the House Mentoring Program, the development of Individual Pathways Plan, and targeted literacy and numeracy support programs in and out of the classroom

- Support for learning and wellbeing outcomes of students from refugee background through the House Mentoring Program, the development of Individual Pathways Plan and targeted literacy and numeracy support programs in and out of the classroom, Leadership Development Programs including [VICSEG](#), academic scholarships

- We provide a positive and respectful learning environment for our students who identify as LGBTIQ+ and follow the Department of Education's *[LGBTIQ Student Support Policy](#)*.

- All students in Out of Home Care are supported in accordance with the Department's *[Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care Policy](#)* including being appointed a Learning Mentor, having an Individual Learning Plan and a Student Support Group (SSG) and referred to Student Support Services for an Educational Needs Assessment

- Students with a disability are supported to be able to engage fully in their learning and school activities in accordance with the Department's *[Students with Disability Policy](#)*, such as through reasonable adjustments to support access to learning programs, consultation with families and where required, student support groups and individual education plans.

- Wellbeing and health staff will undertake health promotion and social skills development in response to needs identified by student wellbeing data, classroom teachers or other school staff each year.

- Staff will apply a trauma-informed approach to working with students who have experienced trauma.

- Students enrolled under the Department's international student program are supported in accordance with our legal obligations and Department's *[International Student Program Policy and Guidelines](#)*.

- All students from Year 10 and above will be assisted to develop a Career Action Plan, with targeted goals and support to plan for their future.

- Mount Alexander College assists students to plan their Year 10 work experience, supported by their Career Action Plan.

Individual

Mount Alexander College 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 discuss 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; and
  - re-engagement programs such as Navigator.

Where necessary the school will support the student's family to engage by:

- Being responsive and sensitive to changes in the student's circumstances and health and wellbeing.
- Collaborating, where appropriate and with the support of the student and their family, with any external allied health professionals, services or agencies that are supporting the student.
- Monitoring individual student attendance and developing Attendance Improvement Plans in collaboration with the student and their family.
- Engaging with our regional Koorie Engagement Support Officers.
- 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.

There are a number of engagement strategies that are employed on a case-by-case need. These include the following Department Supports and Policies:

- [Student Support Groups](#)
- [Individual Education Plans](#)
- [Behaviour - Students](#)
- [Behaviour Support Plans](#)
- [Student Support Services](#)

as well as other Department programs and services such as:

- [Program for Students with Disabilities](#)
- [Mental health toolkit](#)
- [Headspace](#)
- [Navigator](#)
- [LOOKOUT](#)

(d) Identifying students in need of support

Mount Alexander College 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. Mount Alexander College 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; and
- self-referrals or referrals from peers.

(e) Student rights and responsibilities

All members of our school community have a right to experience a safe and supportive school environment. We expect that all students, staff, parents and carers treat each other with respect and dignity. Our school's Statement of Values highlights the rights and responsibilities of members of our community.

Students have the right to:

- participate fully in their education;
- feel safe, secure and happy at school;
- learn in an environment free from bullying, harassment, violence, racism, discrimination or intimidation; and
- 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; and
- respect the right of others to learn.

Students who may have a complaint or concern about something that has happened at school are encouraged to speak to their parents or carers and approach a trusted teacher or a member of the school leadership team. Further information about raising a complaint or concern is available in the school's *Parent and Carer Complaints Policy*.

(f) Student behavioural expectations and management

Behavioural expectations of students are grounded in our school's Statement of Values and Student code of conduct.

Violence, bullying, and other offensive and harmful behaviours such as racism, harassment and discrimination will not be tolerated and will be managed in accordance with this policy. Bullying will be managed in accordance with the school's *Bullying Prevention Policy*.

When a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our school community, Mount Alexander College will institute a staged response, consistent with the Department's policies on behaviour, discipline and student wellbeing and engagement. Where appropriate, parents will be informed about the inappropriate behaviour and the disciplinary action taken by teachers and other school staff.

Our school considers, explores and implements positive and non-punitive interventions to support student behaviour before considering disciplinary measures such as detention, withdrawal of privileges or withdrawal from class.

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 Head of House, Leading Teacher Student Engagement and Wellbeing;
- restorative practices;
- detentions;

- behaviour support and intervention meetings;
- suspension; and
- expulsion.

Suspension, expulsion and restrictive interventions are measures of last resort and may only be used in situations consistent with Department *Suspensions, Expulsions, and Restraining Seclusion Policies*.

In line with Ministerial Order 1125, no student aged 8 or younger will be expelled without the approval of the Secretary of the Department of Education and Training.

The Principal of Mount Alexander College is responsible for ensuring all suspensions and expulsions are recorded on CASES21.

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

(g) Engaging with families

Mount Alexander College values the input of parents/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/carers in our school community.

We work hard to create successful partnerships with parents/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 *Communication of School Policies Policy*.
- Providing parent/carer volunteer opportunities so that families can contribute to school activities.
- Involving families with homework and other curriculum-related activities.
- Involving families in school decision making.
- Coordinating resources and services from the community for families.
- Including families in Student Support Groups and developing individual plans for students.

5. EVALUATION

Mount Alexander College 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, including attendance and absence data

Mount Alexander College will also regularly monitor available Compass data to ensure any wellbeing or engagement issues are acted upon in a timely manner and any intervention occurs as soon as possible.

6. COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website.
- Included in staff induction processes.
- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request.

Our school will also ensure it follows the mandatory parent/carer notification requirements with respect to suspensions and expulsions outlined in the Department's policies at:

- Suspension Process
  https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/suspensions/guidance/1-suspension-process
- Expulsions – Decision Process
  https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/expulsions/guidance/decision

7. FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Mount Alexander College policies and resources relevant to this policy include:

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Bullying Prevention Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Statement of Values and School Philosophy

\- available online http://www.mountalexandercollege.vic.edu.au/about-mac/school-policies/

Department of Education and Training resources:

- Attendance Policy
  https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/attendance/policy
- Student Engagement Policy
  https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-engagement/policy
- Child Safe Standards Policy
  https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/child-safe-standards/policy
- Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care Policy
  https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/supporting-students-out-home-care/policy
- Students with Disability Policy
  https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/students-disability/policy
- LGBTIQ Student Support Policy
  https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/lgbtiq-student-support/policy
- Behaviour – Students Policy
  https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/behaviour-students/policy
- Suspensions Policy
  https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/suspensions/policy
- Expulsions Policy
  https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/expulsions/policy
- Restraint and Seclusion Policy
  https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/restraint-seclusion/policy

8. REVIEW CYCLE AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed:	August, 2022
Consultation:	Student Wellbeing & Engagement Team June 2022 & School Council August 2022.
Approved by:	Principal – Dani Angelico
Next scheduled review date:	August, 2024 Note: the mandatory review cycle is 2 years.