

## STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY



### Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Matthew Flinders Girls Secondary College (MFG) General Office: 03) 4243 0500

### 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

**MFG** 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.

### SCOPE

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

### CONTENTS

1. School profile
2. School values, philosophy, and vision
3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies
4. Identifying students in need of support
5. Student rights and responsibilities
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## POLICY

### 1. School Profile

Matthew Flinders Girls is a leading school for girls in the Greater Geelong region. We offer a positive and engaging educational experience in a community that is welcoming and supportive of students from all walks of life.

Our school has been part of the Geelong community since 1856. While we are proud of our rich heritage, we are also renowned for our innovative teaching and forward-looking programs. We have approximately 600 students enrolled from Year 7-12, from over 55 Primary Schools and 70 school staff members, including a Mental Health Practitioner, Occupational Therapist and School Nurse.

We have a strong track record of academic excellence and many of our students have gone on to be lawyers, scientists, academics, musicians, doctors, teachers, and researchers. Equally, we celebrate the successful applied learning paths that students take because of our partnership with local training organisations and employers.

Our central location enables easy access to the city's vibrant cultural precinct, excellent sporting amenities and the world-class sailing and outdoor facilities at Geelong's sparkling waterfront. We are widely recognised for our wonderful music program and our famous school band, The Sweethearts, has won accolades around the world. Our extra-curricular program offers a rich array of opportunities in sport, sister-school exchanges, performing arts and student leadership. We are also an accredited provider of the Select Entry Advanced Learning Program (SEALP).

We help our students become curious, confident, optimistic and courageous young women, equipped to thrive in a fast-changing world.

In addition to our 2019 Teaching and Learning model, in 2021 we introduced our unique and evidence based MFG Wellbeing model. This model helps to frame our directions and understandings in Wellbeing and Engagement.



## 2. School values, philosophy and vision

As a learning community, MFG values and supports the learning, engagement and wellbeing of our entire school community. We pride ourselves on implementing whole school wellbeing and engagement initiatives that contribute to and strengthen MFG's commitment to Learning.

The MFG Way and our unique 11 MFG traits, forms the foundation of our school community. Our school's vision is to empower students to lead flourishing lives, both within the school context and beyond.

MFG Learners can articulate a core set of **values** and ethical principles, which they apply to their lives.

They are:

- Kind, compassionate and trustworthy
- Caring and respectful of others and themselves
- Knowledgeable about learning and self-aware
- Deep thinkers who are curious and creative
- Problem solvers

- Resilient, adaptable, and able to learn from mistakes
- Hard-working, ambitious, and confident
- Able to respect and celebrate difference and diversity
- Optimistic about the future
- Responsible and active local and global citizens
- Flexible collaborators, leaders, and team members

MFG's vision is to *create lifelong learners who live the MFG traits as positive members of their communities.*

We are committed to fostering a positive, inclusive, and respectful learning environment. The MFG Wellbeing Model provides the framework that underpins and influences all actions connected with engagement and wellbeing within our whole school context.

### 3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies

Through implementing preventive, positive, and proactive programs we ensure that the diverse student body is provided with multiple opportunities to actively contribute to the creation of a stimulating, purposeful and challenging educational experience. Fostering student voice, agency and promoting student leadership are areas of focus for MFG. We are committed to promoting respectful relationships for all members of our school community.

MFG has developed a range of strategies to promote and enhance wellbeing, engagement, positive behaviours and respectful relationships, for all members of the school community.

A summary of the universal (whole of school), targeted (year group specific) and individual wellbeing and engagement strategies used by our school is included below:

#### Universal:

- MFG Wellbeing Model, as a framework to guide wellbeing
- Whole School approach in 'Ready to Learn': High and consistent expectations of all staff, students, and parents and carers
- Our MFG WAY is incorporated into the curriculum and promoted to students, staff, and parent-carers so that the traits are shared and celebrated as the foundation of our school community
- Prioritise positive relationships between staff and students, recognising the fundamental role this plays in building and sustaining student wellbeing (MFG Traits and Celebrations, House Days, Camps Programs, Staff V's Students, Positive Chronicle Communications with students and parent-carers)
- Creating a culture that is inclusive, engaging, and supportive and that embraces and celebrates diversity and empowers all students to participate and feel valued (Student Leadership Program, MFG Trait Celebrate, Stand Out Group, Truganini Group, School Council Student Representatives)
- Welcoming all parents/carers and being responsive to them as partners in learning (Parent Workshops, Weekly Parent-Carer Update, Parent-Carer Forums, School Council)

- Analysing and being responsive to a range of school data such as attendance (MFG Engagement and Attendance Data Base), Attitudes to School Survey, parent survey data, student management data (MFG Case Management Data) and school level assessment data
- Deliver a broad curriculum including VET programs and VCE to ensure that students can choose subjects and programs that are tailored to their interests, strengths and aspirations
- Teachers at MFG use the MFG Teaching and Learning Model, VTLM and differentiated teaching practices 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 MFG 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
- Teachers at MFG adopt a broad range of teaching and assessment approaches (Formative Assessment: Dylan Williams) 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 (Teaching and Learning, and Wellbeing Models) and promoted to students, staff, and parent-carers 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 (Year 7 MFG Way program, 7-12 MFG Way, Proactive Prevention Wellbeing Programs)
- Positive behaviour and student achievement is acknowledged in the classroom, and formally in school assemblies and communication to parent-carers
- 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 the Student Representative Council and other forums including year group meetings, student support groups and wellbeing groups. Students are also encouraged to speak with their teachers, House Leaders, Assistant Principals and Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns
- MFG provides opportunities for cross—age connections amongst students through school plays, athletics, music programs and student support programs
- All students are welcome to self-refer to the Mental Health Practitioner, School Nurse, House Leaders, Assistant Principals 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 wellbeing and engagement supports with our staff and students, which includes programs such as:
  - Respectful Relationships
  - Bullying Prevention Programs (Brainstorm Productions)
  - eSafe Schools (Plus Police Support)
  - Life Changer Program
  - Elephant Education

- Headspace Programs
- Healthy Minds Program
- Use of internal expertise within our MFG curriculum (Leader of Wellbeing/MHP/SN/OT)
- Positive Relationships/Emotions/Stress & Anxiety/Mindset/Emotional Literacy etc
- MFG Diary
- Mental Health Menu Fund / Initiative (toolkit)
- Programs, incursions, and excursions developed to address issue specific needs or behaviour (MFG Advocacy Program, Disability Inclusion Program, OT Support)
- Opportunities for student inclusion (i.e. sports teams, clubs, recess and lunchtime activities, community breakfasts)
- Buddy programs such as the Year 7 MFG Way Program and Year 12 Student Leaders.
- MFG has measures 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, with open forms of report to; House Leaders, Teachers, Assistant Principals, or the Principal

### Targeted

- Every student has a House Leader, who monitors the health, wellbeing, and engagement of students in their year, and acts as a point of contact for students who may need additional support, which may come in the form of internal support services (MHP, SN or OT) or external support services
- First Nations 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. Our 'Truganini' Group meets regularly and is supported by a Koori Education Support Officer (KESO). Our RAP document outlines the school strategies to support our First Nations students and how we are embedding First Nations Education into our community
- Our English as a second language students are supported through our EAL program (curriculum), and all cultural and linguistically diverse students are supported to feel safe and included in our school community
- We support learning and wellbeing outcomes of students from refugee background through providing physical and emotional support where possible
- We provide a positive and respectful learning environment for our students who identify as LGBTIQ+ and follow the Department's policy on LGBTIQ+ Student Support. MFG runs a weekly 'Stand Out' group, Annual Diversity Week (and Harmony Day) celebration and regularly action the MFG Trait: Respect and celebrate difference and diversity
- All students in Out of Home Care are supported in accordance with the Department's policy on Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care including being appointed a Learning Mentor, having an Individual Education Plan and a Student Support Group (SSG) and being referred to Student Support Services for an Educational Needs Assessment/Analysis

- Students with a disability are supported to be able to engage fully in their learning and school activities in accordance with the Department's policy on Students with Disability, 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 at MFG 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 at MFG 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 policy and guidelines at: International Student Program
- 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
- MFG assists students to plan their Year 10 work experience, supported by their Career Action Plan

### Individual

MFG implements a range of strategies that support and promote individual wellbeing and engagement. These can include:

- Building constructive relationships (whole school approach and wellbeing framework) with students at risk or students who are vulnerable due to complex individual circumstances (1:1 Supports via Teachers, House Leaders, MHP, SN, OT, Assistant Principals or Principal)
- Meeting with student and their parent/carer to talk about how best to help the student engage with school (SSG's, IEP's, Parent-Teacher Interviews)
- Developing an Individual Education Plan and/or a Behaviour Support Plan
- Program for Students with Disabilities (DET Initiative)
- Considering if any environmental changes need to be made, for example changing the classroom set up, utilising OT expertise
- Referral Processes in place for:
  - MFG wellbeing supports (MHP, SN, OT)
  - 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, orange door, DFFH or Child First
  - Re-engagement programs such as Navigator

Where necessary MFG 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
- Engaging with regional Koorie Engagement Support Officers
- Running regular Student Support Group meetings for all students:
  - with a disability
  - in Out of Home Care
  - with other complex needs that require ongoing support and monitoring

Further links to information on the Department's Policy and Advisory Library:

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

As well as to other Department programs and services such as:

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

#### **4. Identifying students in need of support**

MFG 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. MFG utilises the following information and tools to identify students in need of extra emotional, social, or educational support:

- Weekly case management intake meeting and data base monitoring (active internal and external supports)
- personal, health and learning information gathered upon enrolment and while the student is enrolled (MFG transition process)
- 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, referrals from peers, parent-carers, or staff.
- Mental Health Practitioner, School Nurse, Occupational Therapist, Headspace in Schools Program



## 5. Student rights and responsibilities

All members of our MFG community have a right to experience a safe and supportive school environment. We expect that all students, staff, parent-carers treat each other with respect and dignity (MFG Trait: Caring and respectful of others and themselves). Our MFG 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
- 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. Further information about raising a complaint or concern is available in our Complaints Policy.

## 6. Student behavioural expectations and management

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 MFG's Bullying Prevention policy.

When a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our school community, MFG 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 House Leader

- restorative practices
- detentions
- behaviour plan and regular reviews
- suspension
- expulsion

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

- <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/suspensions/policy>
- <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/expulsions/policy>
- <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/restraint-seclusion/policy>

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 MFG 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.

## **7. Engaging with families**

MFG 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 parent-carers and staff, supported by our communicating with School Staff policy.
- Providing a weekly parent-carer update over the course of the school year
- providing parent-carer with 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 Education Plans for students

## 8. Evaluation

MFG 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:

- compass
- student survey data
- student focus groups (bullying prevention)
- incidents data
- school reports
- parent survey
- case management
- CASES21, including attendance and absence data
- SOCS

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

## COMMUNICATION

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

- Available publicly on our school's website and our schools' intranet Compass
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included as annual reference in school update
- 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
- Expulsions - Decision

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

The following Department of Education and Training policies are relevant to this Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy:

- [Attendance](#)
- [Student Engagement](#)
- [Child Safe Standards](#)
- [Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care](#)
- [Students with Disability](#)
- [LGBTIQ Student Support](#)
- [Behaviour - Students](#)
- [Suspensions](#)
- [Expulsions](#)
- [Restraint and Seclusion](#)

The following MFG policies are also relevant to this Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy:

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

## POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	February 2023
Consultation	March 2023
Approved by	Principal Michelle Crofts
Next scheduled review date	March 2025