STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact Marra School's Administration Team.

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) the support available to students and families
(d) our school's policies and procedures for responding to inappropriate student behaviour.

Marra 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, 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.

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POLICY

1. School profile

Marra School was established in 2026 and is located approximately 50 kilometres north of Melbourne in the suburb of Kalkallo, on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people. We have 148 students enrolled from Foundation to Year 12, and 40 school staff members including a part time school nurse, a wellbeing leader, a mental health practitioner and an Allied Health team.

Our school shares a site with Ngayuk College who we have a very close community connection with, and there are community sporting facilities adjacent to the school site. The students at Marra School come from Kalkallo, Kalkallo North, Donnybrook, Wallan and the surrounding areas. Approximately 60% of the school population commute to school on the designated bus service, with the other 40% either walking or being driven by family member or carers.

Marra School has developed close ties to the local community, and enjoys support from our local community services, Kindergartens and Primary Schools.

Our school is culturally diverse, surrounded by a growing multicultural community with a high percentage of families having a language background other than English. The school also has representation from the Koorie community. We are proud of our diversity and our inclusive school community.

Marra School includes the following facilities:

- Administration building - including library
- Multipurpose building with specialist classrooms for Art, Food Studies, STEM, Performing Arts, and Physical Education
- Two learning neighbourhoods with 8 classrooms in each and additional multi-purpose /specialist learning areas
- Sports oval
- Playgrounds & Hardcourts
- Bus loop
- Staff carpark

Marra School provides educational programs for students with mild to profound intellectual disability and is open to students aged 5 to 18. We strive to provide a highly differentiated, nurturing environment that empowers students to reach their personal best, in their learning, social and personal capabilities and in their wellbeing.

Marra School delivers the Victorian Curriculum Levels F-10 (inclusive of Foundation A-D) and modifies tasks to support learners to engage with age-appropriate learning content within their achievement levels. Through our learning programs we offer students choice, we celebrate diversity, talents and strengths and create a culture of curiosity. We encourage a growth mindset and support students to build the resilience to persist with more challenging tasks, in subject areas where our skills are still developing or emerging. We encourage students to be brave and to take the risks needed to foster resilience needed for both challenges now and in the future.

2. School values, philosophy and vision

Marra School'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 **Bravery, Resilience and Respect** at every opportunity. The school motto of "Strength in Diversity" is at the heart of education at Marra School.

Our school's vision is to provide aspirational education ensuring wellbeing and learning growth for all students.

Our school values, philosophy and vision guide our organisational leadership, governance, and culture to ensure that child safety and wellbeing are embedded in our school's daily practices.

3. Wellbeing and engagement strategies

Marra School 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 connection 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 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

- all students are supported to engage fully in their learning and school activities in accordance with the Department's policy on [Students with Disability](#) through reasonable adjustments to support access to learning programs, consultation with families, Student Support Groups, and Individual Education Plans
- high and consistent expectations of all staff, students, parents and carers is reinforced by embedding the Statement of Values into our curriculum, in school communication and policies and daily activities and interactions, ensuring shared expectations and understanding within the whole school community.
- school staff are able, and are encouraged, to engage with professional learning to build capabilities in inclusive practices.
- Inclusion Outreach Coaches provide coaching, collaboration, professional learning and support to all staff to further build their capability in inclusive education for our students
- prioritising positive relationships between staff and students, and recognising the fundamental role this plays in building and sustaining student wellbeing is promoted by:
  - explicit communication to all students re. who their key Wellbeing contacts in the school are and who to contact re. any issues or concerns they may have.
  - having an 'open door' policy where students are welcome to self-refer to the student Wellbeing Team/Leader, Year Group Leaders, Assistant Principal (Junior or Senior) and/or Principal should they need additional support of any kind.
  - organising regular events, such as assemblies, celebrations, or themed days, to strengthen connections among students, staff, and families.
  - facilitating circle time at all year levels to encourage student to teacher and peer to peer discussions and activities.
  - incorporating student voice in Student Support Groups (SSGs)
- 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

- deliver a broad curriculum including VET programs, VPC and ASDAN to ensure that students are able to choose subjects and programs that are tailored to their interests, strengths and aspirations
- teachers at Marra School use the VTLM 2.0 and gradual release of responsibility instructional frameworks 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 Marra 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, transition advice sourced from kinder or other settings as well pre-enrolment meetings with parents/carers provide support for 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
- Positive engagement plans are developed to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment that fosters student motivation and supports the monitoring of student attendance and the implementation of attendance improvement strategies at a whole-school, cohort and individual level
- creating a culture that is inclusive, engaging and supportive and empowers all students to participate and feel valued is facilitated through cross-age connections such as whole school celebration days, sports days, school plays and recess and lunchtime activities
- students have the opportunity to contribute to and provide feedback on decisions about school operations through the Student Representative Council. Students are also encouraged to speak with their teachers, Education Support staff, Year Level Coordinator, Assistant Principal and Principal whenever they have any questions, concerns or suggestions.
- sharing a site with Ngayuk College our students have the opportunity for cross-school connections between the secondary students and specialist students - fostering a broader learning environment and allowing better understanding and acceptance of diversity.
- we engage in School Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) with our staff and students, which includes programs such as:
    - Respectful Relationships
    - Safe Schools
    - SoSafe!
    - High Impact Wellbeing Strategies
    - Zones of Regulation
    - Explicit teaching of expected behaviours through school values – Bravery, Resilience, Respect
- a child safe culture is championed and modelled at all levels of the school from the top down and bottom up. Our schools Code of Conduct provides guidelines for staff and volunteers on expected behavioural standards and responsibilities. Risk management strategies focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks to children and young people.
- provision of targeted programs, incursions and excursions developed to address issue specific topics i.e. Social and Emotional Learning via Circle Time/yarning circles, Life Education Van (Health Education), e-Smart Schools Initiative (Cyber safety), Dolly's Dream (Bullying)

- we support our staff to participate in the [Community Understanding and Safety Training](#) (CUST), which strengthens the capability of school staff to build more culturally inclusive practices, including embedding Aboriginal perspectives in the curriculum, and connecting with Aboriginal Community to support ongoing learning and partnership.
- 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>

- each class group is a small size of 12 students or less, supported by teachers, support staff, and a Year Level Senior Teacher, who monitors the health and wellbeing of students in their class/sub school, and act as a point of contact for student needs. This is further supported by the Wellbeing team and Junior or Senior AP
- our school actively engages with Koorie Education Support Officers (KESO) to provide additional cultural and educational experiences for our Koorie students as part of our *Action Plan Aboriginal Learning, Wellbeing and Safety*
- Support Programs and services are offered to both our English as an Additional Language (EAL) students and our Cultural and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) students, to facilitate their language development, academic achievement, and social integration. Other measures implemented by our Wellbeing team include; bilingual resources, cultural orientation programs and translator services for our families when required.
- implementing inclusive education practices that support the diverse needs of students with disabilities. This includes providing specialised support services such as individualised education plans (IEPs), assistive technology, and differentiated instruction to ensure equitable access to learning opportunities and promote their full participation and engagement in the classroom and school community.
- we support learning and wellbeing outcomes of students from refugee background through access and support from local support groups, and following Department of Education supports (Student Support Services) and guidelines including [Supporting students from refugee backgrounds](#).
- we provide a positive and respectful learning environment for our students who identify as LGBTIQA+ and follow the Department's policy on [LGBTIQA+ Student Support](#)
- 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 Learning Plan and a Student Support Group (SSG) and being referred to Student Support Services for an Educational Needs Assessment.
- our Wellbeing team led by our Mental Health and Wellbeing leader 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 apply a trauma-informed approach to working with students who have experienced trauma
- all students from Year 10 and above are assisted to develop a Career Action Plan, with targeted goals and support to plan for their future

- our Senior Secondary students are provided individual pathways planning to support a successful transition from school to post-school life, through our Career Education programs and Structured Workplace Learning/Structured Community Engagement programs.
- Students with complex medical needs are supported to access the curriculum and school facilities. Modifications are put in place if required after consultation with parents/carers and the student's medical team, which may include doctors, paediatricians, NDIS support workers and other relevant parties.

<u>Individual</u>

Marra 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 students and their parent/carer to talk about how best to help the student engage with school
- developing an Individual Education Plan and/or a Behaviour Support Plan
- SSG meetings are strengths based and encourage student voice and participation in an age appropriate and flexible way. Meetings will have minutes where important decisions and information are documented and information that supports the development of Behaviour Support Plans, Positive Engagement Plans, Safety Plans, Disability Inclusion Profiles, Health Plans and IEPs are recorded.
- considering if any environmental changes need to be made for individual students, for example changing the classroom organisation, modifying seating arrangements, providing sensory supports, or creating designated quiet areas to enhance the student's comfort and engagement.
- 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 and Orange Door
  - Re-engagement programs such as Navigator
- students at Marra School are supported through a case management and Student Support Group process. The Student's Support Group look at risks and supportive factors and create plans with student and parent/carer support.
- For students in crisis, who are at risk or in a high support program such as LOOKOUT, referrals to specific services or agencies are made as part of their Individual Education Plan

Where necessary the school supports 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 Plan in line with the departments [Attendance Improvement Strategies](), in collaboration with the student and their family
- engaging with our regional Koorie Engagement Support Officers to ensure culturally responsive support and resources are available for Indigenous students
- 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.

For students in Out of Home Care, LOOKOUT is engaged to ensure advocacy for students and their individual needs.

4. Identifying students in need of support

Marra School 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 that help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. Marra School utilises 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
- detention and suspension data
- engagement with families
- self-referrals or referrals from peers
- SSGs and IEPs
- input from internal and external sources such as counsellors, psychologists, allied health professionals or other specialised staff members
- collaboration with external support services or agencies involved with the student's well-being and development.
- ongoing professional development for staff to enhance their ability to recognise and identify students in need of support

5. 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 welcomed, supported, and valued
- a welcoming, diverse and knowledgeable community
- achieve their goals
- 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:

- follow the school values and expectations to support engagement in their educational program
- demonstrate respect for themselves, their peers, their teachers and members of the school community
- respect the right of others to learn.
- respect school property and resources, maintaining a clean and orderly environment for themselves and others.
- strive to uphold the values and principles outlined in the school's *Statement of Values and School Philosophy*.

Students who may have a complaint or concern about something that has happened at school are encouraged to communicate 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 are grounded in our school's Statement of Values, SWPBS expectations matrix and the Child Safety Code of Conduct.

Violence, bullying, and other offensive and harmful behaviours such as racism, harassment and discrimination are not tolerated and are managed in accordance with this policy and our *Bullying Prevention Policy*

When a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our school community, Marra School institutes a staged response, consistent with the Department's policies on behaviour, discipline and student wellbeing and engagement. Where appropriate, parents/carers are 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 are applied fairly and consistently. Students are always 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 Team Leader
- restorative practices
- detentions
- behaviour support and intervention meetings
- 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 is expelled without the approval of the Secretary of the Department of Education.

The Principal of Marra School is responsible for ensuring all suspensions and expulsions are recorded on CASES21.

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

7. Engaging with families

Marra School values the input of parents and carers, and we 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/carers have access to our school policies and procedures, available on our school website
- maintaining an open, respectful line of communication between parents/carers and staff, supported by our *Communication with School Staff policy.*
- facilitating parent/carer involvement in school activities; encouraging parents and carers to participate in school events, fundraisers, and volunteer opportunities.
- involving families with curriculum-related activities via Compass or SeeSaw
- involving families in school decision making via surveys and our being a part of our school council.
- coordinating resources and services from the community for families
- including families in Student Support Groups and developing individual plans for students.

8. Evaluation

Marra School collects 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 is assessed on an annual basis includes:

- student survey data
- incidents data
- school reports
- parent survey
- case management
- CASES21, including attendance and absence data
- Student Online Case System (SOCS).

Marra School also regularly monitors 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 is communicated to our school community in the following ways

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

Our school also ensures 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 policies and resources 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
- Koorie Education: Policy | education.vic.gov.au
- LGBTIQA+ Student Support
- Behaviour - Students
- Suspensions
- Expulsions

- [Restraint and Seclusion](#)
- [Preventing and Addressing Racism in Schools](#)
- [Multicultural education programs and resources](#)
- [SoSafe Program](#)

The following school 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*
- *Complaints Policy*
- *Duty of Care Policy*
- *Action Plan Aboriginal Learning, Wellbeing and Safety*
- *Communication with School staff policy*

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	May 2025
Consultation	*Consultation with school council, students, staff, parents and carers takes place in Term 1, 2026 (or as soon as the school council are appointed)
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	Term 1, 2026 - to ensure ongoing relevance and continuous improvement, this policy is reviewed every 2 years thereafter.

*The *Student Wellbeing & Engagement policy* is reviewed by the School Council once they are appointed or earlier if a significant incident occurs or if legislative or other changes require in the.