

# STUDENT ENGAGEMENT & WELL-BEING POLICY



**This document is produced in consultation with the Emerson School community**

*To be read in conjunction with Emerson School policies accessible on the school website  
&  
Emerson School Strategic & Annual Implementation Plans*

## **Rationale:**

The emotional and physical wellbeing of our students are pivotal to their success at school, as adolescents, and in their future lives. Physically and emotionally healthy students are happy, able to deal positively with life's challenges, experience a sense of connectedness with the school and others, and are well placed to develop into well-balanced and successful young adults.

## **Aims:**

- To provide an educational environment which recognises, values and builds student wellbeing.
- To develop students who are physically and emotionally healthy.

## **Evaluation:**

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's review cycle

Emerson School Council last ratified this policy in

**July 2016**

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## 1. School Profile Statement

The following statements encapsulate the essence of the Emerson community.

### Environmental Context

Emerson School has a reputation for providing quality services in the Southern Metropolitan Region. The Department of Education and Training (DET) provides free transport to bring approximately seventy percent of students from the Dandenong and surrounding areas. Thirty percent of Emerson's students travel to school on public transport or by independent means.

### Purpose

Emerson School is a select entry specialist school that provides individual educational programs for primary and secondary students with mild intellectual processing disabilities. The majority of students that attend our receive Program for Students with a Disability (PSD) funding. A number of students are functional placements.

### Values

Students, staff, parents/carers, families and friends work together to create a **positive atmosphere** where **praise, feedback and encouragement** are the backbone of our school's environment.

All community members have a **sense of ownership** of our school and are **proud of our achievements and programs**.

The school is dedicated to the **development** of students' talents and wellbeing. Emerson is a **caring** school that exists to provide a quality educational service to our community of students, parents, families and schools.

The Emerson demographic reflects the diverse range of social, economic and multicultural aspects of community. Due to the nature of our school community the 'Student Opinion' survey is not applicable.

## Educational Focus – Strategic Plan 2013 - 2016

**Student Learning:** To improve students' literacy skills.  
To improve students' numeracy skills.

### Student Engagement & Wellbeing

To improve students' self-knowledge and interpersonal skills.

### Student Pathways & Transitions

To improve students' pathways into and beyond the school.

## 2 Whole-School Prevention Statement

### Student Engagement & Wellbeing

#### 2.1 The Personal Development of Individual Students

Emerson School aims to develop the skills and talents of every student. It is important that positive relationships be established between students, teachers and parents/families/carers. This is a key factor in preventative and early intervention initiatives.

It is essential that the relationship of student and pastoral homeroom teacher be strengthened and consolidated at every opportunity. At Emerson we emphasize a positive view.

#### 2.2 Key Student Wellbeing Initiatives

1. You Can Do It
2. 5 Point Plan
3. School House System
4. Honour Cards
5. Student Leadership Program
6. Healthy Relationships Program
7. Stop Think Do Program
8. Student Planners
9. Clearly displayed, negotiated classroom rules

### **2.3 Behavioural Management Strategies**

The following strategies are used extensively at Emerson School:

1. Praise e.g. student of the week, house awards etc.
2. Dilution
3. Re-direction
4. Debriefing
5. Restorative Conferencing
6. Reinforcement of good behaviour and good self management
7. Pro-action - preventing incidents before they happen
8. Modelling - (key personnel)
9. Teaching interpersonal development in a structured curriculum

### **2.4 Behaviours That Need To Be Managed:**

- Unhappiness
- Anxiety and personal stress
- Anger
- Self absorbed or self centredness
- Attention seeking
- Erratic environmental disturbance at home
- Bad language
- Refusal to follow directions
- Social incompetence – e.g. not being able to play or share
- Autistic behaviours
- Difficulties in remembering promises or rules
- Reactive behaviours - including fighting and absconding
- Bullying
- Being out of bounds
- Refusing to wear school uniform
- Vandalism
- Bringing inappropriate material from home

### **2.5 Student Withdrawal Procedures**

If a student needs to be withdrawn from a class or from the school grounds during recess times, they will be asked to report to the offices/reflection rooms of the section co-ordinators, campus principals, or principal where they will be expected to/or assisted to calm down.

## **3 Rights & Responsibilities**

### **3.1 Guiding principles**

Every member of the school community has a right to fully participate in an educational environment that is safe, supportive and inclusive. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and dignity.

### **3.2 Equal Opportunity**

The *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* sets out the types or grounds of discrimination that are unlawful and aims to promote community recognition and acceptance of the equality of men and women and the equality of people of all races, regardless of their religious or political convictions, their impairments or their age.

Under the act it is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the basis of the following attributes:

- age
- breastfeeding
- gender identity
- impairment
- industrial activity
- lawful sexual activity
- marital status
- parental status or status as carer
- physical features
- political belief or activity
- pregnancy
- race
- religious belief or activity
- sex
- sexual orientation
- personal association (with a person who is identified by reference to any of the above attributes).

### 3.3 The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

The Charter sets out a list of rights that reflect the following four basic principles:

- Freedom
- Respect
- Equality
- Dignity

The charter outlines a vision of human rights for all Victorians. The charter affirms that all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights. While the charter demands equality for all, it also emphasises the value of difference. The charter requires public authorities, including government schools and their employees, to act compatibly with human rights and to consider human rights when making decisions and delivering services.

- The right not to be discriminated against
- The right to privacy and reputation
- The right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief
- Cultural rights

It is important to understand that with human rights comes a responsibility to respect other human rights.

All DET employees must act according to the Charter and give proper consideration to human rights when making decisions.

Everyone should:

- Encourage compliance with the Charter
- Support others to act compatibly with the Charter and
- Respect and promote human rights

### 3.4 Bullying and harassment

#### Definitions

**Harassment** is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome or offensive to a person.

**Bullying** is repeated oppression, physical or psychological, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group.

**Cyber bullying** is a form of bullying, which is carried out through an Internet service such as email, chat room, discussion group, online social networking, instant messaging or web pages. It can also include bullying through mobile phone technologies such as SMS, online, FaceBook, social media in general. It may involve text or images (photos, drawings)

Examples of cyber bullying behaviour are:

- teasing and being made fun of
- spreading of rumours online
- sending unwanted messages
- defamation.

Cyber bullying can happen to anyone and the bully can act anonymously if they want. People can also be bullied online by groups of people such as class groups or collective members of an online community.

It is important for the school to provide a safe and friendly environment for students and staff and to encourage care, courtesy and respect for others. All persons have a legal right to protection from harassment under the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act and the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act.

The effects of harassment or bullying include

- poor health – anxiety, depression
- lower self esteem
- reduced study performance
- missed classes, social withdrawal
- reduced career prospects

Harassment is usually directed at a person because of their gender, race, creed or abilities. It can be subtle or explicit.

If a student sees another person being harassed or bullied they should tell the person that you witnessed the incident and advise them to report it to an appropriate person. However, if your friend is harassing another person, let them know that their behaviour is unacceptable.

Bystanders who do nothing to stop bullying may be contributing to the problem by providing an audience for the bully.

**Subtle: (The most common)**

They include:

- Offensive staring and leering.
- Unwanted comments about physical appearance and/or sexual preference.
- Racist or smutty comments or jokes.
- Questions about another's sexual activity.
- Persistent comments about a person's private life or family.
- Physical contact e.g. purposely brushing up against another's body.
- Offensive name-calling.

**Explicit: (obvious)**

They include:

- Grabbing, aggressive hitting, pinching and shoving etc.
- Unwelcome patting, touching, embracing.
- Repeated requests for dates, especially after refusal.
- Offensive gestures, jokes, comments, letters, phone calls or e-mail.
- Sexually and/or racially provocative remarks.
- Displays of sexually graphic material– pornography.
- Requests for sexual favours.

Extreme forms of sexual harassment will lead to criminal prosecution.

**Bullying can involve such things as**

- grabbing, aggressive staring, hitting, pinching kicking, pushing and shoving.
- publicly excluding a person from your group
- taking or breaking a person's property
- knocking a person's books or belongings out of their hands or off their desk
- teasing a person because of their looks

**Cyber bullying**

Being involved in online spaces – either at home or at school - requires students to behave responsibly. This includes:

- the language you use and the things you say
- how you treat others
- respecting people's property (eg copyright)
- visiting appropriate places on-line.

Behaving safely online means:

- protecting your own privacy and personal information
- selecting appropriate spaces to work and contribute
- protecting the privacy of others (this can be sharing personal information or images)
- being proactive in letting someone know if there is something 'not quite right'. At home this would be a parent or carer, at school a teacher.

If you are being harassed or bullied you should:

- Tell the person you don't like what they are doing and you want them to stop.
- Discuss the matter with a student leader or a teacher/coordinator that you feel comfortable with.

Any concerns will be taken seriously. All complaints will be treated confidentially.

## Rights and Responsibilities of Students

Rights	Responsibilities
<p>Students have a right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work in a secure environment where, without intimidation, bullying (including cyber-bullying) or harassment they are able to fully develop their talents, interests and ambitions</li> <li>• Participate fully in the school’s educational programs</li> </ul>	<p>Students have a responsibility to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate fully in the school’s educational program and to attend regularly. Students are expected to display positive behaviours that demonstrate respect for themselves, their peers, their teachers and all other members of the school community.</li> <li>• Demonstrate respect for the rights of others, including the right to learn. Students will contribute to an engaging educational experience for themselves and others.</li> <li>• As students progress through the school they will be encouraged and supported to take greater responsibility for their own learning and participation as members of the whole school community. This involves developing as individual learners who increasingly manage their own learning and growth by setting goals and managing resources to achieve these goals.</li> </ul>

## Rights and Responsibilities of Parents/carers

Rights	Responsibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents/carers have a right to expect that their children will be educated in a secure environment in which care, courtesy and respect for the rights of others are encouraged</li> </ul>	<p>Parents/carers have a responsibility to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote positive educational outcomes for their children by taking an active interest in their child’s educational progress and by modelling positive behaviours.</li> <li>• Ensure their child’s regular attendance</li> <li>• Engage in regular and constructive communication with school staff regarding their child’s learning.</li> <li>• Support the school in maintaining a safe and respectful learning environment for all students.</li> </ul>

## Rights and Responsibilities of Teachers

Rights	Responsibilities
<p>Teachers have a right to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expect that they will be able to teach in a safe and cooperative environment</li> <li>• Be informed, within privacy requirements, about matters relating to students that will affect the teaching and learning program for that student</li> </ul>	<p>Teachers have a responsibility to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fairly, reasonably and consistently, implement the engagement policy.</li> <li>• Know how students learn and how to teach them effectively.</li> <li>• Know the content they teach.</li> <li>• Know their students.</li> <li>• Plan and assess for effective learning.</li> <li>• Create and maintain safe and challenging learning environments.</li> <li>• Use a range of teaching strategies and resources to engage students in effective learning.</li> </ul>

## 4. Shared Expectations

### Schools – principals, teachers and school staff

Emerson School has a responsibility to provide an educational environment that ensures that all students are valued and cared for, feel they are part of the school, and can engage effectively in their learning and experience success.

The school's values are based on the Australian Government's nine values, for Australian schools, which are:

- **Care and Compassion**  
Care for self and others
- **Integrity**  
Act in accordance with principles of moral and ethical conduct, ensure consistency between words and deeds
- **Doing Your Best**  
Seek to accomplish something worthy and admirable, try hard and pursue excellence
- **Respect**  
Treat others with consideration and regard, respect another person's point of view
- **Fair Go**  
Pursue and protect the common good where all people are treated fairly for a just society
- **Responsibility**  
Be accountable for one's own actions, resolve differences in constructive, non-violent and peaceful ways, contribute to society and to civic life, take care of the environment
- **Freedom**  
Enjoy all the rights and privileges of Australian citizenship free from unnecessary interference or control, and stand up for the rights of others
- **Understanding, Tolerance and Inclusion**  
Be aware of others and their cultures, accept diversity within a democratic society, being included and including others
- **Honesty and Trustworthiness**  
Be honest, sincere and seek the truth

School expectations include:

- inclusive teaching practices
- accessible educational provision for all students
- parent/carer partnerships and liaison
- community partnerships which engage families and the community in ways that support student achievement and success
- provision of appropriate student services
- development and provision of appropriate, relevant and a challenging curriculum that gives students the opportunity to experience success in their learning.

### Restorative Practices

The school is committed to the use of restorative practices with students. Restorative Practices:

- are underpinned by student learning and facilitate an environment of safety, trust and connectedness (Bond et al. 2001, Fuller 1999)
- promote awareness of others, responsibility and empathy (Hopkins 2002)
- involve direct and voluntary participation of those affected by misconduct in its resolution (Braithwaite 2001b)
- promote relationship management rather than behaviour management (Cameron & Thorsborne 2001)
- separate the deed from the doer (Marshall et al. 2002)
- are systematic, not situational (Armstrong 2004)
- are concerned with establishing or re-establishing social equality in relationships; that is, relationships in which each person's rights to equal dignity, concern and respect are satisfied (Morrison 2002).

### Diversity in the school community

The school aims to address diversity by:

- maintaining highly skilled, motivated and energetic staff who are better able to meet the needs of our diverse school community
- attracting highly skilled and diverse staff making the school a preferred employer
- increasing the range of knowledge, skills and experiences available in the workforce
- enhancing the capacity for effective decision-making due to the greater diversity of perspectives and inputs
- creating more effective work teams due to increased participation levels and an increased capacity to solve problems.

## 5. School Actions & Consequences

Student engagement, regular attendance and positive behaviours will be supported through relationships based on whole-school and classroom practices, including:

- establishing predictable, fair and democratic classrooms and school environments
- ensuring student participation in the development of classroom and whole school expectations
- providing personalised learning programs where appropriate for individual students
- consistently acknowledging all students
- empowering students by creating multiple opportunities for them to take responsibility and be involved in decision-making
- providing physical environments conducive to positive behaviours and effective engagement in learning

Inappropriate behaviours, including irregular attendance, will be responded to through a staged response, including:

- understanding the student's background and needs
- ensuring a clear understanding of expectations of both students and teachers
- providing consistent school and classroom environments
- scaffolding the student's learning program.

Broader support strategies will include:

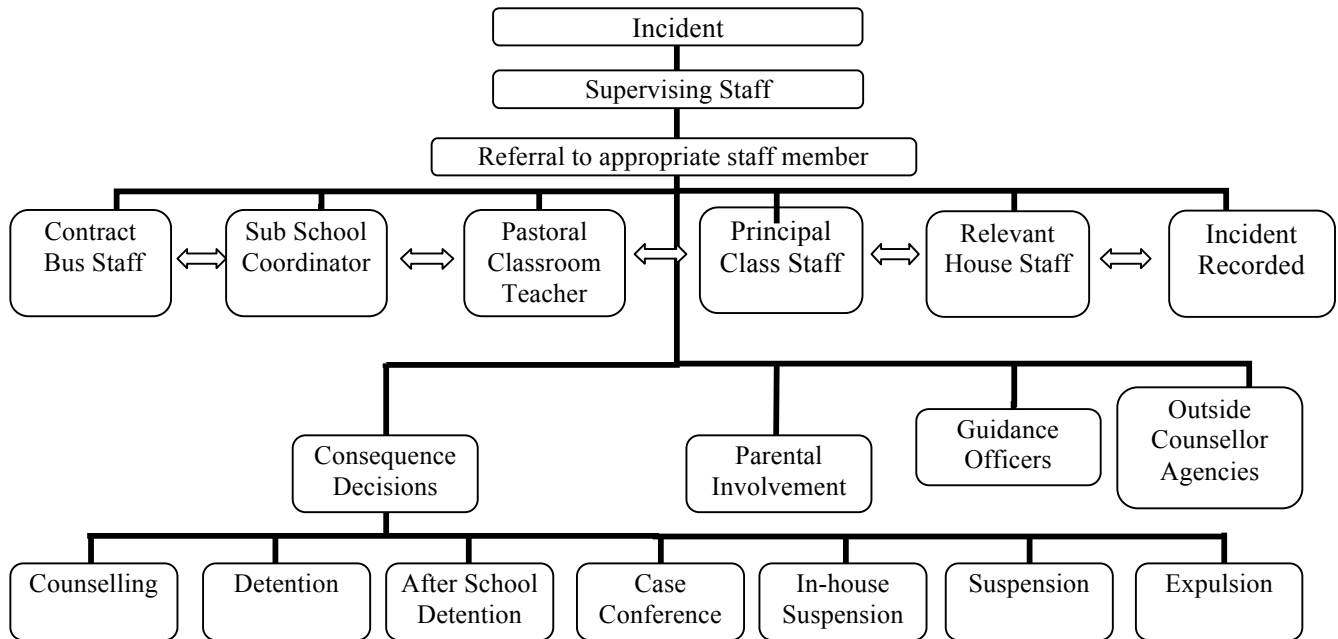
- involving and supporting the parents/carers,
- involving the student's teacher, section coordinator, managed individual pathways and/or careers coordinator
- tutoring/peer tutoring
- mentoring and/or counselling
- convening student support group meetings – the student support group is an important component of the staged response for students facing difficulty with engagement, attendance or behaviour
- developing individualised flexible learning, behaviour or attendance plans
- providing broader educational programs, for example experiential learning, work education, camps/outdoor education/creative arts
- involving community support agencies.

### **Discipline procedures – suspension and expulsion**

A student may only be excluded from school in situations where all other measures have been implemented without success or where an immediate suspension is the only appropriate course of action in response to the student's inappropriate behaviour.



## BEHAVIOURAL MANAGEMENT FLOWCHART



Consequences, which may be used prior to suspension, include:

- Withdrawal of privileges
- Withdrawal from class if a student's behaviour significantly interferes with the rights of other students to learn or the capacity of a teacher to teach a class. The student may be temporarily isolated from regular classroom activities or, in more severe cases, required to leave the classroom for a specified period of time. Where appropriate, parents/carers are informed of such withdrawals.
- Detention - teachers may require a student to finish schoolwork that has not been completed in the regular classroom or to undertake additional or new work or duties at a reasonable time and place.

Where students are required to undertake schoolwork after school, the time is arranged through parental/carers consultation.

Where family circumstances are such that the completion of after-school work would create undue hardship (for example, where students regularly supervise younger siblings in the absence of parents/carers), the school may choose to negotiate alternative disciplinary measures with parents/carers.

## References

Student Engagement Policy	<a href="http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/engagepol.aspx">http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/engagepol.aspx</a>
Framework for Improving Student Outcomes	<a href="http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/management/Pages/schoolperformance.aspx">http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/management/Pages/schoolperformance.aspx</a>
Student Engagement & Inclusion Guidance	<a href="http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/studentengagementguidance.aspx">http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/studentengagementguidance.aspx</a>
Disability Standards for Education 2005	<a href="https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education">https://www.education.gov.au/disability-standards-education</a>
Student Health & Safety	<a href="http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/health/Pages/default.aspx">http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/health/Pages/default.aspx</a>
Charter of Human Rights 2006	<a href="http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/the-law">http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/the-law</a>
Equal Opportunity Act 2010	<a href="http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/the-law">http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/the-law</a>
Education and Training Reform Act 2006	<a href="http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/department/legislation/Pages/act2006.aspx">http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/department/legislation/Pages/act2006.aspx</a>
VIT Teacher Code of Conduct	<a href="https://www.is.vic.edu.au/managing-a-school/compliance-framework/employment-relations/victorian-institute-of-teaching-profession-code-of-conduct/">https://www.is.vic.edu.au/managing-a-school/compliance-framework/employment-relations/victorian-institute-of-teaching-profession-code-of-conduct/</a>
Racial & Religious Tolerance Act	<a href="http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/the-law">http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/the-law</a>
Ministerial Order 870 – Child Safe Standards	<a href="http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/Pages/childsafes.aspx">http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/Pages/childsafes.aspx</a>