



# Mildura Specialist School

## STUDENT WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

### 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.

Mildura Specialist 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 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 excursions.

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### POLICY

#### 1. School profile

Mildura Specialist School is located in the remote Sunraysia area in close proximity to the New South Wales and South Australian borders. As the only facility of its type in this large and remote geographical area it is a major resource for students with an intellectual disability. The catchment area extends beyond the township of Ouyen to the south, east to Robinvale and westward towards South Australia. In the north, it caters for a number of students from New South Wales. The nearest Victorian facilities of a similar type are at Swan Hill, 235 km to the southeast.

Students are taught in small groups, having access to teaching staff, many with special education qualifications, supported by teacher assistants and Allied Health staff. Speech, Occupational and Physiotherapists provide consultancy services for programs.

In developing Individual Learning Plans, consideration is given to each student's needs, strengths and interests. The curriculum is based on the Victorian Curriculum. A multi-sensory program operates for students with severe disabilities. Students in their last two years of school concentrate on a transitional program for post- school life. This may include vocational programs and/or the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning. Students are assessed on their individual goals twice each year.

The school is committed to providing a progressive, stimulating and safe school environment, which takes into account sound management practices, communication between all members of the community.

The school has a strong representation from the Koorie community making up approximately 25% of the overall students enrolled. Mildura Specialist School promotes diversity and inclusive school community.

## 2. School values, philosophy and vision

### **Philosophy/Mission**

Our mission, **"Striving for Independence"** inspires us to create challenges for our students to be the best they can be. Within a safe, respectful and inclusive learning environment, we provide opportunities for students to develop skills for life and participation in the community.

### **Vision**

We aim for individual responsibility, social and academic growth.

### **School Values: Be Responsible, Be Respectful and Be Safe**

The school values are important aspects in daily life and are explicitly taught throughout the school at all levels.

We share these goals with our parents and school community and use the common language of what we aim to do in our school newsletter and recognition awards.

Mildura Specialist School recognises the importance of child safety. Policies, procedures and a code of conduct document the school's commitment to a zero tolerance to child abuse.

The school is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to safety of children with a disability, the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and safety of LGBTI students.

## 3. Engagement strategies

To realise our vision, our school has in place a range of strategies to promote engagement, positive behaviour and respectful relationships for all students in the school. We recognise that some students, as a group or as individuals may need extra social, emotional or educational support to flourish at school, and so we will put in place strategies to identify these students and provide them with the support they need.

The School works collaboratively with students and parents/carers to establish fair and respectful behaviour policies and practices, based on the school's values, expected social competencies and positive peer relationships. There are also intervention strategies in place to address inappropriate behaviours which can negatively impact on the learning environment of the self and others.

The universal (whole-school), targeted (group-specific) and individual engagement strategies used in our school are outlined below:

### Universal

Mildura Specialist School adopts universal approaches that focus on and include:

- high and consistent expectations of all staff, students and parents and carers
- prioritise positive relationships between staff and students, recognising the fundamental role this plays in building and sustaining student wellbeing
- creating a culture that is inclusive, engaging and supportive
- 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 multi-sensory programs, vocational programs and VCAL to ensure that students are able to choose subjects and programs that are tailored to their interests, strengths and aspirations
- teachers at Mildura Specialist School use an High Impact Teaching Strategies (HITS) 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 Mildura Specialist 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
- our school's Statement of Values 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 communication to parents
- 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. Students are also encouraged to speak with their teachers, Year Level Coordinator, Team Leaders, Assistant Principal and Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns.
- create opportunities for cross—age connections amongst students through school plays, athletics, music programs and peer support programs
- All students are welcome to self-refer to the Student Wellbeing Coordinator, Team Leaders, 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

- The school has adopted a School Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) framework.
- programs, incursions and excursions developed to address issue specific behaviour (i.e. anger management programs)
- opportunities for student inclusion (i.e. sports teams, clubs, recess and lunchtime activities)
- buddy programs, peers support programs

### Targeted

Mildura Specialist School implements a range of targeted strategies that support identified groups at risk. These include:

- each year group has a Team Leader and Coordinator, responsible for their year, who monitor the health and wellbeing of students in their year, and act as a point of contact for students who may need additional support
- all students from Year 7 and above will be assisted to develop a Career Action Plan, with targeted goals and support to plan for their future
- connect all Koorie students with a Koorie Engagement Support Officer
- all students in Out of Home Care will be appointed a Learning Mentor, have an Individual Learning Plan and will be referred to Student Support Services for an Educational Needs Assessment
- Mildura Specialist School assists students to plan their Structured Workplace Learning, supported by their Career Action Plan
- 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

### Individual

Mildura Specialist 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 student and their parent/carer to talk about how best to help the student engage with school
- developing an Individual Learning Plan
- in circumstances requiring intensive support 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
  - 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 an Attendance Improvement Plans in collaboration with the student and their family
- running regular Student Support Group meetings for all students.

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

Mildura Specialist School is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported intellectually, emotionally and socially. The Student Wellbeing Coordinator plays a significant role working with staff in developing and implementing strategies help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing. Mildura Specialist School 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 and suspension data
- engagement with families
- self-referrals or referrals from peers

#### 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 safe, secure and happy at school
- learn in an environment free from bullying, harassment, violence, 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.

## 6. Student behavioural expectations

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 Mildura Specialist School's Bullying policy.

When a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our school community, Mildura Specialist School 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 Team Leader
- restorative practices
- behaviour reviews
- suspension
- expulsion

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

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/participation/pages/engagement.aspx>

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

## 7. Engaging with families

Mildura Specialist School 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 parents and staff, supported by our Communicating with School Staff policy.
- providing parent 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.

## 8. Evaluation

Mildura Specialist School 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
- SOCS

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy  
Commitment to Child Safety  
Child Safety Code of Conduct  
Mandatory Reporting Policy  
Attendance Policy

## REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last updated on 22/07/2020 and is scheduled for review in August 2022.