STUDENT WELLBEING, ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSION POLICY

Purpose

To ensure that all students and members of our school community understand:

a. our commitment to providing a safe and supportive learning environment for all 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;
e. our commitment to making sure every member of our school community, regardless of their background or personal attributes, is treated with respect and dignity.

RedGum – The Waldorf School of Central Victoria, is committed to providing a safe, secure and inspiring 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-related activities, including camps and excursions. This Policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Statement of School Values and Philosophy
- RedGum Student Behaviour Policy
- RedGum Curriculum and Student Learning Policy

Relevant Legislation

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cth)
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)

- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)

School profile

RedGum – The Waldorf School of Central Victoria (RedGum) sits on Dja Dja Wurrung country on 18 acres of beautiful bushlands, approximately 5km from the township of Castlemaine.

Established in 1988, RedGum is non-denominational and founded in the educational principles of Rudolf Steiner. The school has a student enrolment drawn from a community with a high student family education and occupation profile. Students travel from Castlemaine and the surrounding region, including Maldon, Chewton, Taradale, and Daylesford.

As a school providing a Steiner education, we seek to enrich children by helping them develop cultural curiosity, respect for diverse identities and abilities, and reverence for the values we share. We define diversity as the spectrum of identities that includes indigenous heritage, race, ethnicity, culture, ancestral heritage, nationality, native language, religion, family structure, socioeconomic class, prior education, gender identity, sexual orientation, appearance, physical ability, learning difference, political affiliation, and occupation.

Students are predominantly grouped into either single-year-level classes, or in some cases combined classes, across the school from Kindergarten to Class 8.

School values, philosophy and vision

RedGum is committed to providing a safe, secure and inspiring 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 recognises the importance of the partnership between the school and parents / guardians to support student learning, engagement and wellbeing. We share a commitment to, and a responsibility for, ensuring inclusive, safe and orderly environments for children and young people. We acknowledge that student flourishing and student learning outcomes are mutually linked.

Vision

Through a contemporary Steiner education, we guide our students to step authentically into the world with a well-directed internal compass, creative and critical thinking and deep connections to Country.

Our highest ambition for our students is that they learn to tread life's paths with courage, insight and an open heart motivated by a sense of service, discernment and a love of learning and life.

Mission

We educate young people in such a way that they can develop into free beings, with a love for the earth and life, and the goodwill to contribute their special gifts to making the world a better place. We strive to provide a creative and empowering education for the child, that nurtures a spiritual and holistic sense of self, other and place, and with that a profound sense of belonging.

By cultivating responsibility, inner strength and a love of learning, a healthy resilience develops in our students as they grow and learn to work collaboratively throughout their time at RedGum.

The school is guided by the Core Principles for Australian Steiner Schools (Steiner Education Australia).

The Australian Steiner Curriculum is creatively taught with integrity and care by our committed and professional staff. This curriculum provides a contemporary education through academic, artistic and practical instruction. Each age and stage of the child's development, in thinking, feeling and willing, is met by this living education.

On Dja Dja Wurrung Country, amongst the box ironbark forest, the natural and cultural environment of our school is a great teacher. Our buildings and surroundings are consciously designed to inspire stewardship, gratitude and connection to the earth.

> Out of love and hope for the future
> of the earth and all life upon it,
> we strive to develop the unique capacities of all within our care.
> To ennoble the mind,
> Fire the imagination,
> Fortify the will and
> Quicken the initiative for life.

Philosophy

At RedGum, our philosophy of teaching and learning is based on a growing understanding and respect of Rudolf Steiner's insights on child development and education, which embraces the social, artistic, academic, physical and spiritual. We enact our philosophy by following the indications given by Dr. Rudolf Steiner and the 7 core principles for Australian Steiner Schools. The philosophy, curriculum and teaching methodology followed at RedGum is brought to the children via the ACARA approved Australian Steiner Curriculum.

The children are immersed in a creative, enriching and wonder-filled learning environment. Children are inspired and guided towards becoming free thinking, socially responsible adults, with healthy connections to themselves, each other and the world.

Values – Striving to be our Best

Central to our values is **integrity**. When we act with integrity, we are dependable, reliable, honest and show good judgement. We demonstrate integrity when our words and actions are aligned with a well-directed internal compass.

We value **respect** between school community members in all communications and interactions. This fosters and reflects a sense of compassion and empathy towards ourselves, each other and the natural world.

We value **kindness** as core to our relationships with each other and to holding a strong and supportive community.

We value **courage** as essential to meeting challenges and to choosing actions which support our community and our environment.

We value **responsibility** for self and others as it allows us to build resilience, both individually and as a society. Taking responsibility is vital to being part of a healthy and strong community.

We value **creativity**, which is imbued in every aspect of teaching and learning. This allows imagination, reverence and wonder to live in each individual.

We value **reverence** as a feeling for the beautiful and the good. Through reverence we appreciate, respect and honour the world around us.

Engagement strategies

RedGum has developed a range of strategies to promote engagement and positive, respectful behaviour for all students in our school. We acknowledge that some students may need additional social, emotional or educational support at school, and that the needs of students will change over time as they grow and learn.

RedGum aspires to work collaboratively with students and parents/ guardians to establish fair and respectful behaviour policies and practices, based on the school's values and developmentally relevant social-emotional competencies. There are also intervention strategies in place to address inappropriate behaviours which can negatively impact on the learning environment of the self and others as well as learning & support strategies to assist students with additional educational needs. A summary of the universal (whole of school), targeted (Class group specific) and individual engagement strategies used by our school is included below:

Universal

We recognise that different or greater protection and support measures may need to be taken for vulnerable or younger students or students with disabilities. This requires not only protection from known hazards, but also protection from harm that could foreseeably arise and

against which preventative measures can be taken.

Individual circumstances will determine what constitutes relevant measures. Various factors will be considered in assessing this including:

- The student's age, background and capabilities – younger students and those with disabilities require more care than mature students;
- Availability of support and resources to assist those with different educational support needs to achieve their goals;
- Highly differentiated approach to teaching and learning as reflected in Student Support Plans;
- Enrolment forms and relevant information on disabilities, educational and health needs;
- Disability and level of functional impact which might expose them to a higher risk of injury;
- Medical conditions which may expose them to risk of injury;
- Special care must be taken to protect students with known conditions such as asthma, anaphylaxis or epilepsy;
- Behavioural characteristics which may impact on safety;
- The nature of the school activity which may require a high level of care for activities which could cause injury;
- The nature of the environment and premises in which activities take place, such as in the yard or on excursions or work placement.

Further to this we emphasise:

- High and consistent expectations of all staff, students and parents and carers;
- Positive relationships between staff and students, recognising the fundamental role this plays in supporting students to flourish;
- Creating a culture that is inclusive, engaging and supportive;
- Welcoming all parents/ guardians 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/curriculum- based assessment data;
- Teachers at RedGum adopt a broad range of teaching and assessment approaches to effectively respond to the educational strengths and needs of students and follow the standards set by the Victorian Institute of Teaching;
- Teachers at RedGum develop their educational programs to incorporate core Steiner Education methodological principles (https://www.steinereducation.edu.au/steiner-education/core-principles-for-australian-steiner-schools-2021/)
    - *Direct experience informs the development of living concepts, particularly as part of the phenomenological approach to scientific study.*
    - *Teachers give an overview of the whole, then move to the parts.*
    - *Early childhood teachers enact play-based learning, the class teachers extend*

learning artistically and imaginatively and the secondary teachers cultivate aesthetic and ethical discernment.
    - *Goodness, Beauty and Truth are ideals that are embedded within the education.*
    - *Imagination and creativity are nurtured through music, the arts and storytelling.*
    - *Rhythm and repetition applied within the day, week and year are enhanced by a creative breathing dynamic within lessons.*
    - *A focus on development of healthy life habits.*
    - *Main lesson structure is employed over several weeks to facilitate deep learning.*
    - *Observation is a key foundation for assessment.*
    - *Individual 'Child Study' is a collegiate form of supporting each student.*
    - *Being in Nature and using natural materials are valued experiences.*
    - *Staff creatively strive towards ongoing deepening of Steiner pedagogy*

- Planned transition programs support students moving into different stages of their schooling (e.g. Kindergarten to Prep, Prep to Class 1, Class 6 to Class 7, Class 8 to Class 9 in the next school);
- Student attendance monitoring by Class Teacher and Admin Staff and development of attendance improvement strategies at a whole-school, cohort and individual levels;
- Our Staff engage in professional learning teams around supporting literacy development (Sounds~Write) and social-emotional competency development (CASEL framework);
- Opportunities for cross-age student inclusion and connection (i.e. chess and bird clubs, student leadership, Buddy programs (Classes 1 & 6, 2 & 7, 3 & 8).

Targeted

- Each class group has a Class Teacher who monitors the health and wellbeing of students in their group, and acts as a point of contact for students who may need additional support.
- Students are also encouraged to speak with their other Teachers, Student Care Leader and Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns.
- RedGum implements a range of strategies that support and promote individual engagement. These can include:
    - Meeting with a student and their parents/ guardians to talk about how best to help the student engage with school and being responsive and sensitive to changes in the student's circumstances and health and wellbeing.
    - Building constructive relationships with students at risk or students who are vulnerable due to complex individual circumstances.
    - Considering whether any environmental changes need to be made, for example

changing the classroom set up.
    - Referring to internal support services e.g. Student Care Leader.
    - Establishing a Student Support Group with associated Behaviour Support Plans and/or Individual Learning Plans.
    - Developing Gender Support Plans through implementing a RedGum Gender Identity Policy.
    - Developing Student Safety, Care and Wellbeing Plans.
    - Referring to external support services including allied health professionals, Headspace, child and adolescent mental health services or ChildFirst.
    - Seeking extra resources under the ISV Programs for eligible students - to provide visiting teacher services for physically disabled/ health impaired students, hearing impaired students, and vision impaired students, and speech pathologists to provide speech therapy.
    - 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.

Identifying students in need of support

RedGum is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure our students are supported cognitively, emotionally and socially. All educational staff are responsible for contributing to the development of strategies and their implementation that help identify students in need of support and enhance student wellbeing.

We use the following information to identify students in need of additional 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;
- Engagement with families

Reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities

RedGum also understands that it has a legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate students with disabilities. A reasonable adjustment is a measure or action taken to assist students with disabilities to participate in their education on the same basis as their peers. Reasonable adjustments will be made for students with disabilities in consultation with the student (as developmentally appropriate), their parents / carers, their teachers and if appropriate, their treating practitioners. Our school may consult through Student Support

Group processes and in other less formal ways. For more information about support available for students with disabilities and communicating with us in relation to a student's disability, contact the Principal/Educational Leader (Student Care) for further information.

Student rights and responsibilities - inclusion and diversity

RedGum acknowledges and celebrates the diversity of backgrounds and experiences in our school community, and we will not tolerate behaviours, language or practices that label, stereotype or demean others. We are committed to creating a school community where all members of our school community are welcomed, accepted and treated equitably and with respect regardless of their backgrounds or personal attributes such as race, language, religious beliefs, gender identity, disability or sexual orientation so that they can participate, achieve and thrive at school.

At RedGum we embed student wellbeing in all learning experiences by creating an educational environment and curriculum that is inclusive and meaningful to all students and by aligning our Student Wellbeing, Engagement and Inclusion Policy with our Curriculum and Student Learning Policy.

At RedGum we value the human rights of every student, and we take our obligations under anti- discrimination laws and the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities seriously.

The programs and teaching at RedGum support and promote the principles and practice of Australian democracy, including a commitment to:

- elected Government;
- the rule of law;
- equal rights for all before the law;
- freedom of religion;
- freedom of speech and association;
- the values of openness and tolerance.

All members of our school community have a right to experience a safe and supportive school environment. We expect that all students, staff, parents / carers treat each other with respect and dignity. Our school's values statements highlight 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.

At RedGum we:

- Actively nurture and promote a culture where everyone is treated with respect and dignity
- ensure that students are not discriminated against (directly or indirectly) and where necessary, are reasonably accommodated to participate in their education and school activities (eg schools sports, concerts, camps or other special events on the same basis as their peers
- acknowledge and respond to the diverse needs, identities and strengths of all students
- encourage empathy and fairness towards others
- challenge stereotypes that promote prejudicial and biased behaviours and practices
- contribute to positive learning, engagement and wellbeing outcomes for students
- respond to complaints and allegations appropriately and ensure that students are not victimised.

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 also speak to a teacher or a member of the school leadership team.

Behavioural expectations

Behavioural expectations of students, staff and families are grounded in our school's values statements. Our Student Behaviour Policy is designed to assist in each child's development toward a balanced, responsible and self-disciplined person who is able to take their place in the community and contribute in a positive manner to school life.

Student bullying behaviour will be responded to consistently through the RedGum Bullying & Harassment Policy.

When a student acts in breach of the behaviour standards of our school community, RedGum will institute a staged response, consistent with DET policies on behaviour, discipline and student wellbeing and engagement.

Where appropriate, parents/carers 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.

Strategies for supporting positive behaviour include:

- Explicitly teaching, modelling and making time to practise appropriate behaviours for inside and outside the classroom;
- Letting all students know that expectations for appropriate behaviour are based on the rights of students to learn and play without disruption and for the teacher and students to feel safe physically and emotionally.
- Hinting when students are not acting responsibly - moving from less interventional techniques (pausing, moving closer, checking work, etc.) to more direct visual and verbal hints aimed at stimulating student responsibility.
- Emphasising that students not only need to act appropriately and take personal responsibility but also need to encourage their class peers to act appropriately and show communal responsibility.
- Noticing when students, especially students who demonstrate more challenging behaviour, respect other students' rights, and saying something supportive or providing some other kind of acknowledgement.
- Recognising the effort required by students to act responsibly, more than the behaviour itself. Minimising the use of rewards for effort by talking to students about the need for rights and responsibilities so that the effort they require to act responsibly is reduced.
- Remaining calm when dealing with misbehaviour.
- Explaining why unhelpful or inappropriate behaviour is unfair to other students before telling students how to behave properly or giving them consequences.
- Using a series of increasingly severe disciplinary measures for misbehaviour when students argue or repeat the misbehaviour.

We use a staged ladder of response with unconditional positive regard in responding to behaviour. If a consequence is warranted, despite what has happened, we focus on repairing and restoring any relationship harm or damage done. With our words and actions, we show each student that we still respect them, value them, care about them as members of our School Community, and that we are there to support their education and development.

While it is expected that all Teachers will have their own strategies for dealing with minor disturbances and disruptive behaviour, there is also an agreed ladder of response which all Staff will observe. This ladder of response involves clear, consistent actions that preserve dignity and support relationship.

Ladder of Response

STEP 1 – Subtle REDIRECTION, often non-verbal

STEP 2 – REMINDER e.g. "Time to… *join in*"

STEP 3 – Quiet act of KINDNESS e.g. "I notice you're not… *joining in* - what can I do to help you?"

STEP 4 – Discrete verbal LAST CHANCE e.g. "When you… *don't join in*, this affects our learning, so I need to give you a warning about missing a part of play/lunchtime if you continue – I remember earlier when you chose to join in, that was really helpful and that's what I need to see you do now"

STEP 5 – CONSEQUENCE e.g. loss of playtime, time out within the classroom, moving to a buddy class (with prior arrangement). Staff will record any consequences formally on Engage.

STEP 6 – Follow-up REPAIR conversation e.g. *What happened? What were you thinking about at the time? What have you thought about since? How do you think this made people feel? Who has been affected by what happened?*

Disciplinary measures that may be applied include:

- Following the agreed Ladder of Response which includes 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 such as preferred seating arrangements, half of playtime, restorative practices to repair impact on relationship from withdrawing privileges
- Referral to the Student Care Leader/Educational Leader
- Behaviour support and intervention meetings
- Detention
- Suspension
- Expulsion

Suspension, expulsion and restrictive interventions are measures of last resort and may only be used in situations consistent with DET 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 is responsible for ensuring all suspensions and expulsions are recorded formally documented and reported to the DET.

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

Engaging with families

RedGum aims to be partners in learning with parents and carers in our school community.

We seek feedback through the Parent Opinion survey, through termly Class Meetings, and from parent representatives as Class Carers. We will strive to support families to engage in their child's learning and build their capacity as active learners.

We work to create successful partnerships with parents / carers by:

- Providing access to school policies
- Maintaining an open, respectful line of communication between parents/carers and staff, supported by our Communications Policy and Code of Conduct.
- Providing parent volunteer opportunities so that families can contribute to school activities e.g. volunteering to attend some excursions, camps
- Involving families with homework and other curriculum-related activities
- Including families in Student Support Groups and developing individual plans for students.
- Inviting parents/carers to school-based events such as concerts, festivals
- Inviting parents/carers Class Meetings and providing information on procedures, curriculum and assessment

Evaluation

RedGum will collect data 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 and act upon wellbeing or engagement issues in a timely manner to ensure that any intervention occurs as soon as possible. Educational staff are responsible for keeping records of concerns related to student wellbeing or engagement.

Specific sources of data that will also be assessed on an annual basis include:

- Incident data
- School reports
- Parent survey
- Data extracted from software such as ENGAGE (Student Data Management System)

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 upon request

Our school will also ensure it follows the parent/carer notification requirements with respect to suspensions and expulsions outlined in DET policies at:
https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/suspensions/guidance/1-suspension-process
https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/expulsions/guidance/decision

Document Control

Document ID	Student Wellbeing Engagement
Owner/Approver:	Principal
Author:	H Bridgwood
Effective Date:	2021
Revision Due Date:	July 2023

Version History

Version	Effective Date	Description of changes from previous version	Authors
1.0	2021		H Bridgwood
1.1	October 2022	Updated to new policy format with new vision, mission and values statements added.	N Johnson
2.0	19/10/2022	Ratified by Board	N Johnson
2.1	26/02/2025	Reformatted	H Ashwell
2.2	1/12/2025	New name, logo, font and colours	H Ashwell