

Student Behaviour Management Policy

March 2024



Rationale

This Student Behaviour Management Policy supports learning, pastoral care and student wellbeing initiatives at Our Lady of Mercy College (OLMC). It is premised on the belief that student learning and wellbeing are best achieved within an environment that is safe, supportive, respectful and inclusive.

The policy reflects the College community's shared expectations in relation to student engagement, attendance and behaviour. It provides an overview of how OLMC will:

- promote positive behaviour in the College community
- seek to prevent behavioural issues
- respond to challenging student behaviour, including at school activities away from the College grounds or while travelling to or from the College.

The policy applies to all members of the College community – students, staff and parents – with the term 'parents' inclusive of guardians or carers who have parental responsibility for a student. It is to be read and observed in conjunction with College policies pertaining to respectful relationships, anti-bullying, responsible use of student digital technologies, student attendance, child safety, and student drug use interventions.

Principles

- Our College is a community that exemplifies the gospel values of love, forgiveness, justice and truth. Our community recognises that everyone has the right to be respected, to feel safe and be safe.
- The College considers that awareness of, recognition of, and responsiveness to the needs and rights of all individuals are essential to human dignity.
- A safe and supportive environment respects the rights of all students to learn and the rights of all teachers to teach. Therefore the College aims to:
 - promote the values of honesty, fairness and respect for others
 - maintain good order and harmony
 - affirm cooperation as well as responsible independence in learning
 - foster self-discipline and responsibility for one's own behaviour.
- In expecting and supporting appropriate behaviour, the College enlivens its values of:
 - being hospitable to all
 - respecting the dignity of each person
 - acting for justice in our community
 - nurturing a spirit of kindness
 - knowing the power of forgiveness and offering this to others.
- Foundational to our work with students, families and the school community is the building of inclusive and authentic relationships. All teachers, students, families and the wider

community contribute to fostering life-affirming relationships that recognise and support the inherent dignity of each person.

- The College strives to provide an inclusive education which values diversity and celebrates difference. Diversity is enacted through a pedagogy of inclusion and a commitment to uphold the rights of all to be welcomed, valued, acknowledged and actively engaged in education.
- Student behaviour is linked to the quality of the learning experiences. Purposeful, authentic, and relevant learning experiences that are of a sufficiently challenging yet achievable standard maximise positive behaviour.
- The approach to student behaviour management at OLMC is based on positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviour and the enactment of targeted supports and/or intensive interventions for students presenting with complex and ongoing behavioural concerns. Underpinning this approach is a commitment to and enactment of **restorative practices**, which seek to:
 - protect personal and school community safety
 - assist students and staff to recognise the impact of their actions on others
 - nurture and restore relationships
 - help students to learn from their mistakes, grow in self-discipline and take responsibility for their actions.
 - be positive and formative in its approach to student behaviour management
 - promote resilience.
- The College is committed to facilitating successful participation and to intervening as early as possible when students are not actively engaged in learning. This may include the creation of a Personalised Learning Plan (PLP) and Behaviour Support Plan (BSP).
- Student engagement, regular attendance and positive behaviours will be supported through relationship based whole-school practices, as well as targeted and individualised support when required.
- The College accepts responsibility for the development and regular review of its expectations and rules, and for helping students understand and follow them.

Definitions

- **Behaviour** – defined as the way in which one acts or conducts oneself, especially towards others. In general terms, it can be considered to be anything we say or do.
- **Appropriate behaviour** – behaving in a manner that is suitable for a public gathering, respecting the other members of the community (class, meeting, assembly, gathering) and treating others as you would wish to be treated. Community members are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and to show mutual respect, maturity, and common sense. In general, appropriate behaviour is any behaviour that contributes to the positive learning environment and aligns with our school rules, codes of conduct and behavioural expectations.
- **Inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour** – includes bullying, harassment and victimisation and may involve actions, words or physical gestures that could reasonably be perceived to be the cause of another person's distress or discomfort. Unacceptable behaviour does not have to be face-to-face, and may take many forms such as gestures, written, telephone or email communications or through social media.

- **Discriminatory conduct** – conduct whereby an individual is treated less favourably on the basis of a relevant attribute, including their sex, race, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, physical appearance or belief or gender reassignment. Such action may constitute discriminatory conduct that is contrary to Commonwealth and Victorian anti-discrimination legislation.
- **Bullying** – a broad concept which may generally be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Bullying generally involves a series or pattern of events in which one individual has demonstrated unacceptable behaviour towards another individual.
- **Challenging behaviour** – behaviour that significantly challenges the day-to-day functioning of the school. The behaviour impacts on learning and interrupts students' and staff capacity to feel safe or function in a safe and orderly environment.
- **At risk behaviour** – any behaviour that has the potential to cause harm or injury to self or other. This includes physical, emotional or psychological harm.
- **Criminal offences** – refers to forms of unacceptable behaviour that may be serious enough to constitute a criminal offence. If OLMC becomes aware that an offence has been or may have been committed, these concerns will be reported to the police or other authorities, as appropriate.
- **Physical restraint** – defined as the use of force to prevent, restrict or subdue the movement of a student's body or part of their body where the student is not free to move away. Restraint does not include protective physical interventions, which involve physical contact to block, deflect or redirect a student's actions, or disengage from a student's grip.
- **Seclusion** is the solitary confinement of a person in a room or area from which their exit is prevented by a barrier or another person. Seclusion includes situations where a person is left alone in a room or area and reasonably believes they cannot leave that room or area, even if they may physically be able to (e.g. the door is not locked). Seclusion does not include the use of a safe place, time out or chill out rooms, being conditions that are set up to support the student and often included in Behaviour Support Plans.

Legislative Context

This policy is informed by relevant Australian and Victorian legislation, including:

- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic.)
- *Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017* (Vic.)
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
- *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (Cth)
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic.)
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (Vic.).

Of note is the *Education Training and Reform Regulations 2017* (Vic.) (sch 4 cl 12) that outlines a school's obligations to ensure that the care, safety and welfare of all students attending the school. In discharging its duty of care responsibilities, the school and teaching staff must exercise professional judgment to achieve a balance between ensuring that students do not face an unreasonable risk of harm, encouraging students' independence, and maximising learning opportunities. Non-teaching staff, volunteers and external providers must exercise judgment appropriate in the circumstances. The school must also comply with legislation related to Occupational Health and Safety for staff.

Procedures

Clear and Shared Behaviour Expectations

Effective behaviour management is based on expectations and rules that are clearly promoted and consistently maintained. The College accepts responsibility for the development and regular review of its expectations and rules, and for helping students understand and follow them. The College also seeks and expects the support and cooperation of parents in fostering and encouraging positive student behaviour.

The broad parameters of the College's expectations are outlined in this framework:

Shared behaviour expectations framework

Students are expected to:	Parents are expected to:	College staff are expected to:
1. Take responsibility for their learning and have high expectations of themselves that they can learn	1. Have high expectations of their child's behaviour, and understand and support the implementation of the College's behavioural expectations	1. Promote positive reinforcement and enhance student self-esteem by having a planned approach for recognising and responding to appropriate behaviour
2. Model the College's core values of respect, honesty, kindness, justice and forgiveness	2. Openly communicate with the College in regard to their child's circumstances	2. Deliver an inclusive and comprehensive curriculum which promotes positive behaviours and emphasises the wellbeing of every student, focusing on pro-social behaviours
3. Take responsibility for their own behaviour and the impact of their behaviour on others	3. Cooperate with the College by assisting in the development and enforcement of strategies to address individual needs	3. Employ whole-school and classroom practices to establish a climate in which appropriate behaviour is the norm for all students and focus on the implementation of preventative and early intervention strategies to deal with attendance and behavioural issues
4. Comply with this policy and work with teachers and parents in developing strategies to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) obey all reasonable requests of staff b) respect the rights of others to be safe and learn c) respect the property of others 	4. Provide complete, accurate and up-to-date information when completing an enrolment form and supply the College, prior to and during the course of enrolment, with any additional information as may be requested, including medical/specialist reports (where relevant to their child's schooling), reports from previous schools, court	4. Consistently apply this policy through a shared collegiate understanding and only exclude students in extreme circumstances

	orders or parenting agreements	
	5. Comply with the College's behaviour aims and Code of Conduct for Parents, also, support the College in upholding prescribed standards of dress, appearance and attendance	5. Engage in professional development to enable them to develop and maintain positive relationships with their students
	6. Acknowledge and understand that unacceptable behaviour by their child, or repeated behaviour by a parent that, in the College's view, is unacceptable and damaging to the partnership between parents and the College, may result in suspension or termination of their child's enrolment.	6. Recognise that for some students additional support may be needed in the form of staged responses and, where necessary, reintegrate students after exclusion

Student Attendance

For students to succeed, achieve their potential and experience connectedness with the College, it is vital that they consistently attend their scheduled classes, are punctual and are actively engaged in required work.

The College recognises the importance of providing clear guidance on student attendance that is applicable to all members of the school community. Full details on attendance expectations are set out in [OLMC's Attendance Policy](#) and in associated Department of Education [School Attendance Guidelines](#).

Positive Reinforcement of Appropriate Behaviour

At OLMC, positive behaviour will be explicitly taught and reinforced.

School-wide supports to reinforce appropriate behaviour will include:

- establishing predictable, fair and democratic classrooms and school environments
- providing physical environments that are conducive to positive behaviours and effective engagement in learning
- ensuring student participation in the development and implementation of whole-school expectations
- empowering students by creating opportunities to take responsibility and be involved in decision making
- monitoring attendance and academic progress of students with the view to recognising students at risk and intervening early
- developing Personalised Learning Plans (PLP) in consultation with the Program Support Group (PSG) where appropriate for individual students.

Targeted supports for some students may include:

- understanding the student's background and needs
- ensuring a clear understanding of expectations by both students and teachers
- providing consistent school and classroom environments
- scaffolding the student's learning program
- data collection and documentation of incidents to inform decision making
- creating a Personalised Learning Plan (PLP) a Behaviour Support Plan (BSP) or an Attendance Maximisation Plan (AMP) as appropriate
- parent consultation via phone, videoconference or interview
- the design and implementation of support strategies that assist the student to self-calm, such as the provision of a quiet space or designated alternative area that they can go to if they are feeling overwhelmed
- case conferences with specialist providers where needed and appropriate.

Intensive interventions for students presenting with complex and ongoing difficulties may include:

- considering the motivation for or functions of behaviours
- consultations with mutually agreed specialised support services
- having clear data-informed strategies focused on preventing the occurrence of an identified behaviour, such as avoiding or adapting the circumstances that usually trigger this behaviour
- a focus on building skills and developing alternative preferred behaviours
- using the student's strengths and interests to increase success
- regular Program Support Group meetings to review the student's PLP, BSP, safety plans and/or Attendance Maximisation Plan.

The development of such interventions will require support from parents and will often require consent to access specialised services.

Consequences for Student Misbehaviour

In an effort to be fair and yet consistent in managing student behaviour, a broad range of consequences for misbehaviour are employed. Staff who manage students' poor choices in behaviour will, as appropriate, base their responses and apply sanctions in line with restorative justice principles.

Consequences for misbehaviour may take the form of:

- verbal warnings which identify the misbehaviour and give a student the opportunity to change her behaviour
- moving a student in the room to a less disrupting situation
- separating a student from the class for a short period of time to provide an opportunity for the student to settle
- engagement in restorative actions supervised by the classroom teacher or a student's Pastoral Leader/House Coordinator
- withdrawal of privileges
- withdrawal from class activities for a specified period. Where appropriate, parents will be informed of such withdrawals
- detention
- contracts for conduct/attendance/bullying.

When a student is displaying chronic patterns of problem behaviour, a targeted or intensive response as described above will be implemented in order to identify and address the presenting issues and reinforce positive behaviours.

Serious Behaviour Breaches and Major Disciplinary Sanctions

A 'serious behaviour breach' at OLMC is understood generally as activities or behaviours of a student which:

- are offensive, or dangerous, to the physical or emotional health of any student or staff member (e.g., illicit possession and use of drugs, illicit use of prohibited weapons); or
- consistently and deliberately fails to comply with the reasonable directions of the Head of Student Wellbeing and the Principal; or
- consistently and deliberately interferes with the educational opportunities and endeavours of other students.

In such instances, a 'major disciplinary sanction' which may be invoked includes:

- **Suspension** – the temporary withdrawal of a student's rights to attendance at the College;
- **Negotiated transfer** – a change of school either to another Catholic school or to a school in another sector;
- **Expulsion** – total withdrawal of a student's right of attendance at the College.

The College recognises that suspension and expulsion are serious disciplinary measures that will only be considered and enacted when other measures have not produced a satisfactory response, or where there is a threat to another person and immediate action is required.

Before consideration and/or enactment of suspension, negotiated transfer or expulsion, the College will uphold the following principles and practices:

- A thorough investigation will always precede any action.
- The principal shall confer with the College Leadership Team as the nature of the case demands.
- Parents will be actively involved in the process, unless the circumstances require urgent intervention.
- Counselling of a student will be offered.
- The principal will be responsible for *procedural fairness* and appropriate support of the student and family members.
- The principal shall confer with the College's governing authority, Mercy Education Limited, as the nature of the case demands.
- The principal will take account of recommended procedures for suspension, negotiated transfer or expulsion as outlined in the Suspension, Negotiated Transfer and Expulsion Policy.

NOTE: The College will not, under any circumstances, permit the use of corporal punishment, which is expressly prohibited under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic).

Restraint and Seclusion

The use of restraint or seclusion (refer Definitions, above) does not form part of any of the College's Behaviour Support Plans or Student Safety Plan, however, restraint and/or seclusion may be used in limited emergency situations, such as when:

1. The student's behaviour poses an imminent threat of physical harm or danger;
2. The action is reasonable in all the circumstances;
3. There is no less restrictive means of responding in the circumstances.

In such instances, the following guiding principles and practices will apply:

- In making a decision to implement any form of restraint or seclusion, College staff will maintain awareness that their actions may directly increase the risk of injury and trauma, both for the student and for the staff member themselves.
- Actions that may be considered reasonable will be made by staff present and will depend on the individual circumstances of each case, as a matter of professional judgment.

- If a student is placed in a separate room as a means of seclusion, staff will maintain appropriate supervision of the student.
- The least restrictive form of restraint/seclusion will be used for the minimum time possible.
- The restraint/seclusion will cease as soon as the immediate danger for the student or others is averted.
- Staff involved in an incident of restraint or seclusion will immediately notify the principal and provide for the immediate care and safety of those concerned.
- The student's parents will be contacted. A post-incident evaluation and report will be completed.

Assessing and Mitigating Health and Safety Risks

To assist in the discharge of regulated health and safety responsibilities, the College will adhere to an Occupational Health & Safety Program through which potential safety hazards are identified and analysed in terms of the likelihood of an event occurring, and risk treatments are applied in order to prevent and/or manage the potential consequences if the event was to occur.

Related Policies and Guidelines

MEL_OLMC Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
 MEL_OLMC Child Safety and Wellbeing Procedures
 OLMC Child Safe Policy – Child Friendly Version
 Child Safety Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy
 Mercy Education Ltd & OLMC Code of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers
 Mercy Education Ltd & OLMC Parent Code of Conduct
 Complaints Resolution Policy
 Counselling Services Policy
 Occupational Health and Safety Policy
 Respectful Relationships: Anti Bullying Policy
 Student Drug Use: Intervention and Management Policy
 Student Wellbeing Policy
 Student Attendance Policy
 Student Responsible Use Digital Technologies, Devices and Social Media
 Uniform Expectations – Guidelines
 OLMC Suspension, Negotiated Transfer and Expulsion Policy

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