



VIC-EDU-P-026 Student Voice Policy

1. Policy Scope

This policy applies to all students and staff at MacKillop Education.

2. Policy Outline

Context

Our values of respect, hope, justice, compassion, and collaboration inform the quality of relationships we establish and all that we do to ensure our learning community is a place of welcome and safety. MacKillop Education celebrates diversity, and we are committed to inclusion, so that every student, regardless of race, religion, culture, gender identity or personal circumstances, including barriers to learning, can access education and experience success.

Our model, Reframing Learning and Teaching Environments (ReLATE), supports our trauma-informed practice and highlights the critical partnership between students, parents/guardians/carers, and staff, as we work together, to enhance the learning outcomes for every child.

Purpose

This policy provides each student with authentic and safe opportunities to learn that their opinions, and ideas are important. It also upholds their right to speak and be heard, to provide feedback and lodge complaints, and to have input into decision making, which strengthens the culture of MacKillop Education.

Policy statement

As we prepare our students at MacKillop Education for their future participation in our community, the tenets of student voice, agency and leadership are critical. Our Student Voice Policy seeks to support our vision to transform, empower and engage students in their learning.

MacKillop Education also understands its responsibilities to keep children and young people safe.

Child Safe Standard 3 requires schools to ensure children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously. This standard supports schools to create a culture that values and promotes student participation, including:

- informing students about their rights and responsibilities in an age-appropriate way
- recognising the importance of friendships and peer support
- enabling students to actively participate in creating a culture that is safe for them and their peers.

Child Safe Standard 7 focuses on ensuring that schools have complaints processes that are child-focused, culturally safe, and accessible to everyone.

Principles

Our students will be empowered to:

- take ownership of their learning
- make purposeful contributions to their learning environments

- respond positively to challenges and opportunities throughout their lives.

Definitions

Student voice	Authentic student voice provides opportunities for students to collaborate and make decisions with adults around their safety, what and how they learn and how their learning is assessed. It is not simply about giving students the opportunity to communicate ideas and opinions - it is about students having the power to influence change.
Student agency	Refers to the level of autonomy and power that a student experiences in the learning environment. Agency gives students the power to direct and take responsibility for their learning, creating independent and self-regulating learners.
Student leadership	Student leaders have an increased sense of responsibility to help others and to model leadership principles and values. This includes listening to and being able to clarify the issues of the students they represent and advocating on their behalf. Student leadership is not confined to a small group of individuals, as leadership potential is inherent within all learners. Trust, autonomy, and relationships are enhanced through the development of leadership qualities.

3. Practice

Staff support students both formally and informally, to enact their voice, have agency over decisions, develop leadership skills, and communicate feedback or complaints. Such regular practices include:

Student agency

- Participating in quarterly Student Support Group (SSG) meetings
- Collaborating with the development of Individual Education Plans (IEP) and Safety Plans
- Participating in referral and transition interviews and meetings
- Negotiating student interest-based learning and break-time activities.
- Supporting student-initiated activities and projects
- Consulting with students when making decisions that impact them

Empowering students

- Informing students through the Rights, Responsibilities and Respectful Relationships curriculum
- Participating in daily ReLATE Circle (Reframing Learning & Teaching Environments)
- Applying the S.E.L.F. tool¹ to work through challenges or conflict
- Participating in Life Space Interviews², restorative practices, and other trauma-informed recovery processes
- Implementing Positive Education practices.

¹ The S.E.L.F. framework is a tool within the Sanctuary model that can assist students to work through issues more easily. S.E.L.F. stands for safety, emotion management, loss and future.

² Life Space Interviews (LSI) are conducted after a young person experiences a crisis. In the LSI the young person is taken through seven steps to help them process and learn from the experience.

Providing feedback

- Providing regular opportunities for student feedback on classroom learning
- Participating in Student Voice Forums
- Completing Wellbeing, MACCSIS³ and other surveys
- Contributing to Principal, Sanctuary and other reviews

Note: Student complaints will be taken seriously and responded to promptly as outlined in the VIC-EDU-P-005 Complaints Policy

Student leadership

- Participating as a member of the Student Representative Council (SRC)
- Participating and providing leadership at school assemblies and events

Note: The VIC-EDU-F-037 Student Leadership Framework outlines the structures and processes at MacKillop Education to provide students with leadership opportunities.

4. Responsibilities

All MacKillop Education staff have a responsibility to enable, model, encourage, scaffold, support, and listen to student voice. Leaders assist teachers to establish a culture where all school community members value and contribute to the advancement of student voice, agency, and leadership. Campus Principals ensure that students have regular, authentic opportunities for student voice and that their ideas and feedback are carefully considered in school decisions.

5. Related legislation, policy, guidelines, and resources

- Catholic Education Melbourne, (2017) Horizons of Hope: Wellbeing in a Catholic School. The Archdiocese of Melbourne, Catholic Education, East Melbourne.
- Catholic Education Melbourne, (2018.) Excel: Wellbeing for Learning. The Archdiocese of Melbourne, Catholic Education, East Melbourne.
- Catholic Education Melbourne, (2018). Student Voice Statement for Catholic Schools. The Archdiocese of Melbourne, Catholic Education, East Melbourne.
- Department of Education and Training, (2018). Amplify: Empowering Students through Voice, Agency and Leadership. Department of Education and Training, East Melbourne.
- Hart, R. (1992). Children's participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship, Florence: UNICEF International Child Development Centre.
- ReLATE: Rethinking Learning and Teaching Environments. MacKillop Family Services, Melbourne
- <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-voice-agency-leadership/policy>
- VIC-EDU-F-037 Student Leadership Framework
- VIC-EDU-P-005 Complaints Policy

³ MACCSIS – Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools – School Improvement Surveys. MACCSIS is an annual process whereby schools listen to the thoughts and feeling students, families and staff have about how their school can improve.

6. Approval and Review Details

Approval and Review	Details
Approval Authority	Group Director, The MacKillop Institute and MacKillop Education
Approval Date	13 December 2023
Recommended to Approval Authority by	MacKillop Education Leadership Team
Next Review Date	1 November 2024
Version	2