



## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

Every parent and carer wants their child to be safe, respected, responsive and responsible at school. Every student wants to feel safe, to be respected, and to feel valued and included. Every teacher wants to be able to teach every student to their full capacity in a positive environment of mutual respect and sustained attention and focus.

When such aspirations become a reality, *all* students will be able to participate positively at school. They will grow, succeed and flourish by being fully engaged in their learning and other uplifting school activities.

In a positive school environment a sense of community grows. And it is in community that we find the strength to learn from and support each other. Achieving a sense of community requires commitment to known and shared values that enable the building of environments of mutual respect and safety; positive learning, participation and engagement; respect for the rights and dignity of others; and accountability for personal behaviour.

In short, community requires *agreement*, understood as mutual understanding, conformity and consistency in our participation and engagement in that community.

NSW government schools have a responsibility to create and sustain a culture of excellence. With this responsibility comes a sense of community and high expectations for all in a structured, disciplined, high quality teaching and learning environment.

The Department of Education has identified some key touchstones for putting this responsibility into action. These include:

- (i) Clear expectations relating to students' application to their studies and conduct based on the values of NSW Public Schools and the Department of Education Behaviour Code for Students.
- (ii) Wearing the school uniform as a visible symbol of commitment to the school as a community, promoting a shared sense of belonging and presenting a positive identity for the school community.
- (iii) Mitigating against the known harms stemming from the excessive use by young people of mobile phones and other devices—harms that can be educational,



psychological, physical, mental and social—while at the same time recognising and allowing for the positive potential of digital media use in this highly technological age.

In relation to the first touchstone (i), a *Student Participation and Engagement Agreement* has been produced and distributed to students. It is asked that students sign this *Agreement*, have it witnessed by a parent or carer, and to then return it to school. This *Agreement* is not a contract. Agreement here means to articulate consistency between the values of the Department of Education and the procedures, practices and processes that shape students' participation and engagement at this school.

In NSW Department of Education schools, it is possible to ask students to sign a Code of Conduct as an expression of their individual commitment to maximising their learning and to keeping the school safe and secure for all students. Indeed, such a Code has been described as a possible marker of excellence in a school. The Springwood High School *Student Participation and Engagement Agreement* is our code of conduct. It is an agreement in the sense of being a statement of the values that are mutually shared in NSW public schools, and for which students are expected to mutually conform. It makes clear the values of the Department of Education and the school, and asks students to acknowledge that they understand the school may be required to take action in circumstances of misconduct. It provides a basis for conversations with students and, if and when required, parents in instances of non-compliance and student behaviour that require action to be taken. In making clear the expectations and rules for students in relation to behaviour, learning, participation and engagement, it is an enabling support for the school in being an effective, safe and pleasant learning environment.

In relation to the second and third touchstones (ii & iii), school uniform and mobile phone use, school policies and procedures have been revised in liaison with the P&C and the SRC. In a nutshell, it is expected that students will be in uniform, and that mobile phones and digital devices will be placed in students' bags at the start of each lesson, and remain there for the duration of the lesson, unless the teacher has given instructions, guidance, and direct supervision for the use of a device for learning purposes during the lesson. The procedures that will follow from non-compliance with school expectations regarding uniform and mobile device use in classrooms are set down in documents to be uploaded to the school website: click on the *About our school* tab / *Rules and policies* / *School frameworks*.

## **SPRINGWOOD HIGH SCHOOL**

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Parents and carers who may wish to individually discuss aspects of the content of this note, including any matters of support that may be needed for a student to assist them in their participation and engagement in the community of the school, are respectfully invited to contact me, as we seek to work in partnership to promote student learning.

Regards

Dr Mark Howie  
Principal

4/7/19