



Suspension, Expulsion and Exclusion of Students Policy

1. Rationale

1.1 One of the distinguishing characteristics of the Catholic school, as part of its evangelising mission, is the development of community and creation of a climate and culture permeated by Gospel values, which respects the dignity of all human persons. The creation of such an environment provides opportunities for school communities to build a sense of acceptance, inclusion and connectedness for all students.

1.2 Various Church documents on the Catholic school name the school's responsibility for supporting parents in the development of a sense of responsibility and self-discipline in their students. However, "parents have a particularly important part to play in the educating community, since it is to them that primary and natural responsibility for their children's education belongs" (*The Catholic School of the Threshold of the Third Millennium n20*).

Catholic schools, therefore, share in the responsibility with parents for teaching students to, "overcome their individualism and discover, in the light of faith, their specific vocation to live responsibly in a community with others". (*The Catholic School n45*). The educative process is intended to assist students to make a "conscious choice of living a responsible and coherent way of life." (*The Catholic School n49*).

1.3 In the Catholic school environment students are therefore, guided and encouraged to develop a sense of responsibility, self-control and self-discipline, and regulate their conduct in accordance with Christian principles. Through this development students come to:

- respect the welfare and needs of themselves and others;
- be aware that their actions influence the creation and maintenance of the Catholic environment of which they are part;
- enhance the development of positive self-images;
- gain a sense of belonging within the school and wider community;
- develop an understanding of the consequences of their behaviour; and
- develop an awareness of processes, which assist in resolving problems as they arise.

1.4 Despite the focus on these positive outcomes, the continued behaviour of a minority of students may require Principals to consider their suspension and on the decision of the Director of Schools, their expulsion from the school or their exclusion from the system of Catholic schools in the Diocese.



2. Guidelines

- 2.1 Schools are to develop their behaviour management policies and procedures, including those relating to suspension, expulsion and exclusion, and make them known to students, parents, carers, members of school staff and where applicable the Parish Priest or in the case of a Secondary School, the Dean of the Region.
- 2.2 Action to suspend, expel or exclude a student is a serious matter and will be carried out in a just and equitable manner, taking into account responsibilities to the whole school community and based on the principles of natural justice (the right to know; the right to respond and the right to a fair and unbiased decision).
- 2.3 These guidelines and procedures should be considered in conjunction with the Behaviour Management and Discipline Policies of the school and *Path to Life: A Framework for Pastoral Care and Wellbeing for Systemic Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Wollongong (2011)*.

3. Suspension

- 3.1 Suspension occurs when a student's attendance at school has been temporarily withdrawn as a disciplinary measure, on the authority of the Principal for a set short or extended period of time.
 - **Short suspension** is a suspension from school for up to three school days
 - **Extended suspension** is a suspension for more than three school days
- 3.2 Suspension allows a period of time for the parties involved to reflect on and enter into dialogue about the behaviour and circumstances that have led to the suspension, and to focus on the development of an appropriate response and process for a return to school.
- 3.3 Suspension of a student may occur when the behaviour of a student is prejudicial to the safety and welfare of the student, staff and other students of the school and/or the reputation of the school.

Suspension can arise in circumstances where a student:

- is abusive or violent;
- threatens serious physical harm to another person;
- is involved in sexual harassment or abuse of others;



- is in possession of illegal drugs;
 - is in possession of a prohibited weapon;
 - is in possession of or disseminating banned material or material which may cause offence;
 - is involved in behaviour of a criminal nature, e.g. damaging or stealing property.
 - is involved in behaviour that is disruptive to the good order and function of the school, or behaviour endangering the wellbeing or safety of others.
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- is seriously defiant or uncooperative when asked to follow a reasonable directive;
 - engages in bullying, cyberbullying, harassment or victimisation.
 - otherwise displays disregard for the rules, standards and codes of the school.
 - continually disrupts the good order of the school;
 - continually disrupts learning and teaching.
 - poses a significant risk to the safety of another person, including work health safety;
 - in the case of post compulsory age students, unsatisfactory participation in learning, e.g. non-attendance at classes, refusal to complete set learning tasks and repeated failure to meet required deadlines.

4. Expulsion and Exclusion

- 4.1 Expulsion occurs when a student's attendance at school has been permanently withdrawn from the school on the authority of the Director of Schools. It involves a termination of the contract entered into at the time of enrolment by the parent(s)/carer(s).
- 4.2 Exclusion occurs when a student is prevented from enrolling in any systemic Catholic school in the Diocese of Wollongong on the authority of the Director of Schools.
- 4.3 Expulsion or exclusion of a student may occur when any of the student's conduct under paragraph 3.3 above is persistent or is otherwise incompatible with the student's ongoing enrolment.
- 4.4 Normally a period or periods of suspension occurs as a means of dealing with unacceptable behaviours, before deciding to expel a student. However, on some occasions, the students' misconduct may be considered so serious that the Director of Schools may decide to expel and possibly exclude the student in circumstances where there has been no prior suspension.



5. Procedures

5.1 Consultation and Communication

- 5.1.1 Students and their parent(s)/carer(s) are to be made aware of the processes that will be followed in dealing with issues of suspension, expulsion and exclusion.
- 5.1.2 Where behaviours are emerging which are causing concern and which could lead to suspension and/or expulsion/exclusion, parent(s)/carer(s) should be informed of these, and it should be indicated that the continuation of these behaviours could lead to suspension and ultimately expulsion or exclusion. In certain circumstances, informing some parent(s)/carer(s) may involve obtaining the services of an interpreter.
- 5.1.3 Students will be informed of the behaviours causing concern which led to the consideration for suspension or expulsion/exclusion and will be given an opportunity to respond. Any decisions made to suspend, expel or exclude will be made on evidence which indicates that the student “more probably than not” behaved in such a manner. The decision will take into account what is best for the student, other students, staff and the broader school community.
- 5.1.4 The Principal ensures that appropriate support and assistance, which may include the school counsellor, have been provided before a student is suspended, expelled or excluded.

6. Documentation

Appropriate documentation of serious incidents, displays of unacceptable behaviours and details relating to suspension and exclusion will be kept on file.

7. Process for Suspension

- 7.1 Normally, a process outlined in section 5.1.2 would occur before invoking suspension. However, in some circumstances serious misbehaviour or misconduct may lead to immediate suspension.
- 7.2 When a decision is made to suspend a student, the Principal is to inform the student of the grounds for the decision and the student must be given the opportunity to respond.



- 7.3 Notification of the decision to suspend the student and the grounds for the decision must be made to the parent(s)/carer(s). This notification should be followed up in writing. Where English is not the parent(s) first language, the Principal will take steps to assist the parent(s).
- 7.4 This written notification should include:
- the reason(s) for the suspension;
 - the duration and dates of the suspension;
 - the parent(s)/carer(s) responsibility for the care and safety of the student during the time of the suspension;
 - reference to the expectations regarding schoolwork and/or study if required during the suspension period;
 - offer of support in dealing with the issues involved, and
 - details relating to a re-entry meeting to discuss a Return to School plan for the student.
- 7.5 A student who has been suspended should not be sent home from the school without the full knowledge of parent(s)/carer(s).
- 7.6 Where a suspension is actioned, the Principal is to notify the relevant Head of School Improvement on the appropriate form (see Appendix 1), and where applicable, the Parish Priest.
- 7.7 Ordinarily, a student must not be suspended from school or classes for more than three days (extended suspension), at any one time without the approval of the relevant Head of School Improvement. In any such instance the Director of Schools is to be notified by the Head of School Improvement.
- 7.8 As soon as possible after suspension, the Principal is to arrange a meeting with the parties and the other appropriate personnel to deal with the issues surrounding the suspension.
- 7.9 Prior to the end of the period of suspension, a Return to School plan would normally be developed which would include a behaviour management support plan.
- 7.10 Students must be re-admitted to school and classes after the period of suspension.
- 7.11 On the class roll 'E' is to be marked for the days the student is suspended from school.



8. Process for Expulsion and Exclusion

- 8.1 Where a recommendation to expel a student is being considered, the parent(s)/carer(s), and where appropriate the student concerned, are to meet with Principal and the relevant Head of School Improvement to outline the reasons for the proposed expulsion.
- 8.2 Parent(s) and the student involved will be given the opportunity to respond.
- 8.3 The evidence in support of the recommendation to expel as well as the response of the parent(s)/carer(s) and student will be considered.
- 8.4 If a decision is made to recommend the expulsion of the student, the parent(s)/carer(s) and student will be notified in writing that a recommendation to this effect is going to be made to the Director of Schools.
- 8.5 The recommendation for expulsion is to be made on the appropriate form through the Head of School Improvement, and should include the relevant information on which the recommendation is based.
- 8.6 The Director of Schools will consider the information from the school on the one hand and student, parent(s)/carer(s) on the other hand before arriving at a decision.
- 8.7 Where the Director's decision is to uphold the recommendation and expel a student, this decision is to be conveyed to the parent(s)/carer(s) by the Principal in writing before the expulsion is put into effect. The Parish Priest or Dean of the region in which the student resides should also be notified.
- 8.8 Where a student is to be expelled from a school, it is envisaged that alternative placements for that student will be canvassed with the parent(s)/carer(s) by appropriate personnel, and through the appropriate channels.
- 8.9 The processes outlined in 8.1 – 8.8 above will also apply in circumstances where a decision is made by the Director of Schools to exclude a student.



9. Review of the Decision to Suspend, Expel or Exclude

- 9.1 Where a student has been suspended, expelled or excluded, parents, caregivers and where applicable students may request a review of that decision. A request for review should be in writing, setting out the grounds upon which the review is being requested and addressed to the Principal in respect of a suspension and the Director of Schools, Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Wollongong in respect of an expulsion or exclusion. The review itself will be conducted by the Head of School Improvement in the case of a suspension and a specifically convened Appeals Panel in the case of an expulsion or exclusion.
- 9.2 The fact that a review has been requested does not “put on hold” a Principal’s decision to suspend a student.
- 9.3 In the case where a request has been made to review the expulsion or exclusion of a student, the student is to remain expelled or excluded until the review has been conducted.
- 9.4 While the review of a decision to suspend or expel/exclude is being considered, alternative placements for the student may continue to be explored.
- 9.5 Requests to review decisions to suspend, expel or exclude students are to be dealt with expeditiously.

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