

Suspension & Exclusion of Students Policy

1.0 RATIONALE

- 1.1 One of the distinguishing characteristics of the Catholic school, as part of its evangelising mission, is the development of community and the 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 on 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/or exclusion from school.

2.0 GUIDELINES

- 2.1 Schools are to develop their behaviour management policies and procedures, including those relating to suspension 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 Secondary School, the Dean of the Region.

2.2 Action to suspend 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.

2.3 These guidelines and procedures should be considered in conjunction with the Behaviour Management and Discipline Policies of the school, and the *Guidelines for the Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools in Partnership with Centacare*.

3.0 SUSPENSION

3.1 Suspension occurs when a student's attendance at school has been withdrawn as a disciplinary measure, on the authority of the Principal for a 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 the parties involved a period of time to reflect on and enter into dialogue about the behaviours 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 violent;
- threatens serious physical harm to another person;
- is involved in sexual harassment and abuse of others;
- is in the possession of illegal drugs;
- is in the possession of a prohibited weapon;
- is involved in behaviour of a criminal nature relating to the school, e.g. damaging or stealing school property; and,
- displays persistent disregard for school rules and standards of behaviour, e.g. continual harassment, bullying and/or abuse of others, etc.

4.0 EXCLUSION

4.1 Exclusion occurs when a student's attendance at school has been totally withdrawn 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 of a student may occur:

- when the presence of a student continually disrupts the good order of the school;
- when the presence of the student places the safety of others at risk; and,
- 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.

4.3 Normally a period or periods of suspension occur as a means of dealing with unacceptable behaviours, before deciding to exclude a student.

5.0 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 and exclusion.
- 5.1.2 Where behaviours are emerging which are causing concern and which could lead to suspension and/or 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 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 lead to the consideration for suspension or exclusion and will be given an opportunity to respond. Any decisions, made to suspend 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 and the 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 or excluded.

6.0 DOCUMENTATION

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

7.0 SUSPENSION

- 7.1 Normally, a final warning would be given before invoking suspension. In some circumstances serious misbehaviour may lead to automatic 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 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;
 - request for support in dealing with the issues involved; and,
 - details relating to a follow up meeting.
- 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 Head of Cluster Services on the appropriate form (see Appendix 1), and where applicable, the Parish Priest.
- 7.7 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 Director of Schools. In such instances the Director of Schools is to be notified, through the Head of Cluster Services.

- 7.8 As soon as possible after the suspension, the Principal arranges a meeting with the parties and the other appropriate personnel to deal with issues surrounding the suspension.
- 7.9 Some program with goals, timeline, etc., would normally form part of a return to school after a period of suspension.
- 7.10 Students must be readmitted 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.

8.0 EXCLUSION

- 8.1 Where a recommendation to exclude a student is considered, the parent(s)/carer(s), and where appropriate the student concerned, meet with the Principal and Head of Cluster Services to outline the reasons for the proposed exclusion.
- 8.2 Parent(s) and the student involved will be given the opportunity to respond.
- 8.3 On making the decision to proceed with the recommendation to exclude the student, the parent(s)/carer(s) and student are notified in writing that a recommendation to this effect is going to be made to the Director of Schools.
- 8.4 The recommendation for exclusion is to be made on the appropriate form, through the Head of Cluster Services, and should include the relevant information on which the recommendation is based.
- 8.5 Where a student is to be excluded from a school, it is envisaged that alternative placements for that student are canvassed with the parent(s)/carer(s) by appropriate personnel, and through appropriate channels.
- 8.6 Where the Director's decision is to uphold the recommendation and exclude a student, this decision is to be conveyed to the parent(s)/carer(s) by the Principal in writing before the exclusion is put into effect. The Parish Priest or Dean of the Region from which the student comes, should also be notified.

9.0 REVIEW OF THE DECISION TO SUSPEND OR EXCLUDE

- 9.1 Where a student has been suspended 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 on which the review is being requested and addressed to the Director of Schools at the Wollongong Catholic Education Office.
- 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 exclusion of a student, the student is to remain on suspension until the review has been conducted.
- 9.4 While the review of a decision to suspend or exclude is being considered the normal processes should be followed to resolve the issues relating to the suspension and in the case of exclusion to explore alternative placements for the student.
- 9.5 Requests to review decisions to suspend or exclude students are to be dealt with expeditiously.