

# Parents

Student Engagement and  
Inclusion Guidance

## Fact sheet for parents and carers of Koorie children and young people

### New suspension and expulsion procedures

Every member of a school community has the right to feel safe at school. As a parent or carer you should be confident that you are sending your child into a safe and supportive learning environment.

Suspension and expulsion are serious disciplinary measures and should be used only by school principals as a last resort in managing a student's behaviour.

As of 1 March 2014 changes have been made to how suspension and expulsion processes work in government schools.

The grounds for suspension and expulsion have also been updated to better enable principals to prevent and respond to behavioural incidents that may compromise the health, wellbeing and safety of staff and students. The grounds for suspension and expulsion can be found at:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/behaviour/Pages/discipline.aspx>

### The 'relevant person' – ensuring students are supported

It is important that every student has a person to support and advocate for them throughout a suspension or expulsion process. The new guidance on suspensions and expulsions has introduced the concept of a **relevant person**, which is the adult who will play this important support role.

**In most cases a student's relevant person will be their parent or carer.** However, as the parent or carer, you can also nominate another responsible adult to act as the relevant person if you can't take on this role yourself.

The role of the relevant person **does not replace your role as parent or carer** with regard to responsibility for decision-making about your child's education, and for their enrolment and attendance at school. Rather, it has been introduced in recognition of the fact that students come from diverse family backgrounds and that a parent or carer may not always be able to act as a support person for their child.

Parents and carers of Koorie students can appoint a **Koorie Engagement Support Officer** or **Koorie Education Coordinator** as the relevant person if they wish to.

You - or someone you have nominated to be relevant person for your child - are also entitled to have an independent support person come with you to meetings, as long as they are not acting for fee or reward. **Koorie Engagement Support Officers** or **Koorie Education Coordinators** can support you through these processes as an independent support person.



## The 'suitable persons' list

If a parent or carer does not wish to act as the relevant person for their child during a suspension or expulsion process, does not wish a Koorie Education Support Officer or Koorie Education Coordinator to be the relevant person either, and is unable to nominate another adult to fulfil this role, then the principal can appoint a suitable person.

In these situations the school principal will appoint a person from the department's 'suitable persons list' to act as the student's relevant person. The suitable persons list is a register of departmental employees with relevant welfare expertise, experience and training.

The Suitable persons list has been established to ensure that every student has somebody to support and advocate for them – that no student is unsupported.

## Meetings with the school principal – the behaviour review conference

The principal is required to hold a meeting, called a behaviour review conference, when an expulsion is being considered for a student. The student and their relevant person must be invited to this meeting to discuss the student's behaviour, and possible consequences and strategies to address the behaviour.

You (or the nominated relevant person if you have chosen not to be relevant person) can also request a meeting with the principal at any point during an expulsion process if you have any concerns.

As said above, the relevant person may bring an independent support person to any school meeting, as long as they are not acting for fee or reward. You may want to ask a **Koorie Engagement Support Officer** or **Koorie Education Coordinator** to attend a behaviour review conference as your support person.

When suspending a student, principals are not required to hold a behaviour review meeting with the student and relevant person either before or after the suspension, but as the student's relevant person, you can request a meeting with the school principal at any point during the suspension process if you wish to discuss any concerns.

If you are unable to resolve your concerns with the school principal, you can contact the relevant department regional office to discuss further. To contact your closest regional office see: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/regions.aspx>

## Expulsion documents and appeals

The school must provide every expelled student with a Notice of Expulsion and, at the same time, an expulsion appeal form. A student who has been expelled has the right to appeal their expulsion. You, as the student's relevant person may exercise this right on their behalf, taking into consideration your child's views and best interests.

## More information

For more information on suspension and expulsion processes, see:

- FAQs for parents: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/behaviour/Pages/faqs.aspx>
- Procedures following suspension brochure: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/parents/health/suspensionprocedures.pdf>
- Procedures following expulsion brochure: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/parents/health/expulsionprocedures.pdf>
- Disciplinary Measures section of the Student Engagement and Inclusion Guidance: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/discipline.aspx>

For more information about specific supports available to Koorie children and young people, see:

- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/aboriginal/Pages/wannikworkforce.aspx>

To get in contact with a Koorie Education Coordinator, who will put you in contact with a Koorie Engagement Support Officer, see:

- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/wannikregional.aspx>