

PROCEDURES FOR SUSPENSION

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS* FOLLOWING YOUR CHILD'S SUSPENSION

This brochure must be given to the student's relevant person with the *Notice of Suspension*.

This brochure provides the following information for students and their relevant person:

- What to do if you have any concerns about your child's suspension
- How schools can support students after a suspension
- Where to go for further information and support.

For extra information on the suspension process, including roles and responsibilities, and what you can expect to have occurred prior to suspension, see www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/behaviour/Pages/faqs.aspx

MY CHILD HAS BEEN SUSPENDED, WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Suspension is a disciplinary measure that involves temporary removal of a student from classes or school approved activities for a specified period of time. Your child will be allowed to return to class or the school approved activity after the set period of suspension.

WHAT WILL THE PRINCIPAL HAVE CONSIDERED BEFORE SUSPENSION?

Before a student can be suspended, the principal must ensure that:

- The student has had the opportunity to be heard
- Any information or documentation provided by the student or their relevant person has been taken into account in making the decision regarding suspension
- Other forms of action to address the behaviour for which the student is being suspended have been considered.

WHAT IS AN IMMEDIATE SUSPENSION?

Immediate suspensions can occur only if a student behaves in such a way that would provide the basis for a suspension ordinarily, and their behaviour is such that they are putting the health, safety and wellbeing of themselves, staff or other students at significant risk.

If the principal has determined that an immediate suspension is appropriate in the circumstances, school staff should have attempted to immediately

notify you of this decision, and the need to collect your child as soon as is practicable.

If you were not able to be contacted and/or you were unable to make arrangements for the collection of your child, the principal should have made arrangements for your child to be adequately supervised until the end of the school day or the conclusion of the school approved activity.

It is important to remember that even though the time frames for an immediate suspension differ from a suspension implemented under normal circumstances, the process is the same and the principal must ensure that your child has had the opportunity to be heard and that his or her circumstances are taken into account.

HOW LONG CAN MY CHILD BE SUSPENDED FOR?

The maximum continuous period of time a student may be suspended at any one time is 5 school days.

In addition, a student cannot be suspended for more than 15 days in a school year without written approval from the Regional Director.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM NOT SURE IF MY CHILD'S BEHAVIOUR WARRANTED A SUSPENSION?

Every school is required to have a *Student Engagement Policy* which sets out the school community's shared expectation in the areas of student engagement, respectful behaviour, attendance and acts as a reference point for how your school will respond to individual student circumstance.

You may also like to ask your school for a copy of their *Student Engagement Policy* or you can check their website to access it. This policy will set out the behavioural expectations within your school and will be a useful reference point in determining whether these expectations have been breached.

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/engagepol.aspx

Suspensions are a serious disciplinary measure and are best reserved for incidents when other measures have not produced a satisfactory outcome.

Your child can be suspended if, whilst attending school or travelling to or from school or engaged in any school activity away from the school (including travel to or from that activity), they –

- Behave in such a way as to pose a danger, whether actual, perceived or threatened, to the health, safety or wellbeing of any person;
- Cause significant damage to or destruction of property;
- Commit or attempts to commit or is knowingly involved in the theft of property;
- Possess, use or sell or deliberately assist another person to possess, use or sell illicit substances or weapons;
- Fail to comply with any clear and reasonable instruction of a staff member so as to pose a danger, whether actual, perceived or threatened, to the health, safety or wellbeing of any person;
- Consistently engage in behaviour that vilifies, defames, degrades or humiliates another person based on age; breastfeeding; gender; identity; impairment; industrial activity; lawful sexual activity; marital status; parental status; physical features; political belief or activity; pregnancy; race; religious belief or activity; sexual orientation; personal association (whether as a relative or otherwise) with a person who is identified by reference to any of the above attributes;
- Consistently behave in an unproductive manner that interferes with the wellbeing, safety or educational opportunities of any other student.

It is the principal's responsibility to determine whether to suspend a student in any specific circumstances. If you have any concerns about the suspension process or your child's behaviour, you are encouraged to contact the principal to discuss your child, your concerns, and the reasons and grounds for the suspension.

It is important to remember that you can request a meeting with the principal at any point during a suspension process, even if the suspension has already been implemented.

If you do not feel your concerns have been addressed, you can contact the Community Liaison Officer in your closest departmental regional office or one of the other support services listed at the end of this brochure.

WHAT IS AN IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION? WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR MY CHILD?

An in-school suspension means that a student remains on school grounds under supervision but does not attend class. This may include:

- Pairing the student up with an experienced teacher or appropriate staff member for the day and accompanying that teacher to classes
- Participating in a work-based in-school suspension (e.g. working outdoors or preparation of educational materials)
- Providing a dedicated room or area where students can complete their in-school suspension under appropriate supervision.

It may also take on a different form depending on the particular school and circumstances.

It is important to remember that whilst this is different from a traditional 'out-of-school' suspension, the process for both is the same and you should receive the same notification and documentation.

WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD THE SCHOOL PROVIDE ME WITH WHEN SUSPENDING MY CHILD?

When a principal determines that a suspension is appropriate, the school must provide both you and your child with the following documents:

- *Notice of Suspension* and
- This brochure.

The principal should also provide you with the following information:

- The reasons for the suspension
- The school days on which the suspension will occur
- Where the suspension will occur (i.e. on school premises or otherwise)

- The contact details for additional support services for you and your child as appropriate
- The arrangements made for the provision of appropriate school work for your child for the period of the suspension.

Notes:

- (1) If your child is suspended for 3 days or less, the principal should ensure that he or she is provided with meaningful work to complete whilst they are absent from school.
- (2) If your child has been suspended for more than 3 days, the principal should ensure that a *Student Absence Learning Plan* and a *Return to School Plan* are provided.

WHAT WILL MY CHILD DO WHEN THEY ARE SUSPENDED? DOES THE SCHOOL HAVE TO PROVIDE HIM/HER WITH WORK?

It is expected that for a suspension of three days or under, a student is given meaningful work to complete. If a student is suspended for over three days, it is expected that a *Student Absence Plan* and a *Return to School Plan* are developed. Templates of these plans can be found at www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/resources.aspx

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE END OF THE SUSPENSION?

Once the period of suspension has ended, your child should be supported to return to school.

If your child has been suspended for a period of three or more school days, it is recommended that a post-suspension Student Support Group meeting be held with the school, you and your child. You can also request that a Student Support Group meeting is held if you feel your child needs additional support when returning to school or to address any behavioural issues that may have led to the incident that result in a suspension.

The purpose of this meeting is to provide an opportunity to discuss the following:

- The *Student Absence Learning Plan* and the school work completed during the period of suspension
- The strategies to be developed within and outside of the school to meet the educational, social and emotional needs of your child
- The respective responsibilities of you, your child, the school staff and other professionals in supporting these strategies.

For more information on Student Support Group meetings see

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/participation/Pages/supportgroups.aspx

For more information on what supports are available to schools see *Strategies and Supports Available to Schools*

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/interventions.aspx

CAN I APPEAL A SUSPENSION?

There is no process for appealing a suspension.

If you have any concerns about your child's suspension, you should immediately discuss these concerns with the school principal.

If you do not believe that your concerns have been adequately addressed by the school principal, you may contact the Community Liaison Officer at your local regional office.

If you still believe that your concerns have not been adequately addressed by the regional office, you can write to your Regional Director or the Deputy Secretary, Regional Support Group to lodge a formal complaint.

Additional information, phone numbers and further contact details regarding parent complaints can be found on the DEECD website at www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/parentcomplaint.htm

WHO CAN I CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION OR SUPPORT?

The procedures for suspension and expulsion are detailed in the Student Engagement and Inclusion Guidance which can be found by visiting:

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/studengage.aspx

FAQs for parents regarding suspension and expulsion are available at:

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/behaviour/Pages/faqs.aspx

If you require additional information and support, you should contact the Community Liaison Officer at your closest regional office (contact details next page).

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

REGIONAL OFFICES

NORTH EASTERN VICTORIA REGION

Email: nevr@edumail.vic.gov.au

Benalla

Post: PO Box 403, Benalla, Victoria 3672

Location: 150 Bridge Street East, Benalla,
Victoria 3672

Phone: (03) 5761 2100

Fax: (03) 5762 5039

Glen Waverley

Location: Level 3, 295 Springvale Road,
Glen Waverley 3150, Victoria

Phone: (03) 9265 2400

Fax: (03) 9265 2444

NORTH WESTERN VICTORIA REGION

Email: nwvr@edumail.vic.gov.au

Bendigo

Post: PO Box 442, Bendigo, Victoria 3552

Location: 7-15 McLaren Street, Bendigo,
Victoria 3550

Phone: (03) 5440 3111

Fax: (03) 5442 5321

Coburg

Post: Locked Bag 2001, Coburg, VIC 3058

Location: Level 2, 189 Urquhart Street,
Coburg, VIC 3058

Phone: (03) 9488 9488

Fax: (03) 9488 9400

SOUTH EASTERN VICTORIA REGION

Email: sevr@edumail.vic.gov.au

Dandenong

Post: PO Box 5, Dandenong 3175

Location: 165-169 Thomas Street, Dandenong 3175

Phone: (03) 8765 5600

Fax: (03) 8765 5666

Moe

Post: PO Box 381, Moe, Victoria 3825

Location: Corner Kirk and Haigh Streets,
Moe, Victoria 3825

Phone: (03) 5127 0400

Fax: (03) 5126 1933

SOUTH WESTERN VICTORIA REGION

Email: swvr@edumail.vic.gov.au

Ballarat

Location: 109 Armstrong Street North, Ballarat, 3350

Phone: (03) 5337 8444

Fax: (03) 5333 2135

West Footscray

Location: Level 3, Whitten Oval, 417 Barkly Street,
West Footscray, 3012
(entry via glass sliding doors)

Phone: (03) 9291 6500

Fax: (03) 9291 6565

Geelong

Post: PO Box 2086, Geelong, Victoria 3220

Location: 5A Little Ryrie Street, Geelong, Victoria 3220

Phone: (03) 5225 1000

Fax: (03) 5225 1099

ADDITIONAL AVAILABLE SUPPORT

Parentline Victoria

Phone: 13 22 89 - 8am to midnight 7 days a week

Parentline provides a statewide telephone counselling service to parents and carers of children aged from birth to eighteen years.

Parents Victoria

Phone: (03) 9380 2158 or 1800 032 023 (rural callers only)

Website: www.parentsvictoria.asn.au

Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc.

Phone: (03) 9416 3833

Website: www.vaeai.org.au

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

Phone: 1300 767 299

Website: www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth/services/child/

Children's Protection Society

Phone: (03) 9450 0900

Website: www.cps.org.au

Australian Childhood Foundation

Phone: (03) 9874 3922

Website: www.childhood.org.au/website/default.asp

Association of School Councils in Victoria

Phone: (03) 9808 2499

Website: www.asciv.org.au/ASCIV/Welcome.html

Victorian Council of School Organisations

Phone: (03) 9429 5900

Website: www.viccsso.org.au/

Victorian Multicultural Commission

Phone: (03) 9208 3184

Website: www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/