

Student Dress Codes

Good Practice Case Studies

Case Study 1: Exemption request for a facial piercing

Treasury Secondary College has a student dress code policy stating that students can have a maximum of one ear piercing in each ear. No other visible piercings are allowed. The student dress code policy is provided to parents during the school enrolment process and is reviewed by the school council on a regular basis. Students are aware of the dress code policy and are consulted when the dress code is reviewed to ensure their views are considered.

A student in Year 10 has his lip pierced during the school holidays and returns to school with the lip piercing. The student and his parents apply for an exemption to the student dress code policy so that the student can wear his lip piercing. As part of the application for exemption, the student and his parents speak to the principal about the reasoning behind his request.

The principal listens to the explanation from the student and his parents, and determines whether the exemption should be granted. The principal considers whether the right of the student to freedom of expression would be considered to outweigh the interests of the school community upheld by the restriction on piercings in the dress code. The principal will also consider whether there would be any way of accommodating the student's request while still achieving the purposes of the dress code.

In this case, the application is rejected and the student and his parents are given written reasons for the rejection. The principal explains to the student and his parents that school councils are able to develop and implement

student dress codes and, under the current policy, lip piercings are not allowed (for several reasons, including occupational health and safety). The principal tells the student and his parents that they can write to the school council about this issue, so that their views can be considered when the student dress code policy is next reviewed.

Case Study 2: Exemption request on religious/cultural grounds

City Secondary College has a large Muslim population at the school. Several Muslim girls are selected to represent the school at an inter-school swimming carnival. However, due to their religious and cultural beliefs they feel uncomfortable wearing the bathers that are included as part of the school uniform. Several girls and their parents apply for exemptions to wear a different style of bathers on this basis.

The principal grants exemptions to these students, and they are able to wear a different style of bathers (provided that the bathers are in school colours).

Because several exemptions are granted for the same reason, the principal brings the issue to the attention of the school council. A partial review of the student dress code policy is undertaken by the school council to address the issue. Consultation takes place with the local Muslim community, and additional styles of bathers are added to the school uniform to allow the Muslim students to feel comfortable participating in swimming activities.

