

Suspension of Students Policy

Rationale

Sacred Heart College is a Catholic learning and faith community in the Mercy tradition that has at its centre the dignity and safety of each person. Our approach to behaviour support is underpinned by the belief that all students should maintain a level of behaviour that respects their rights and the rights of others to:

- be safe and feel safe
- learn to the best of their ability
- express themselves
- take responsibility for their choices.

To this end, the College commits to working in partnership with families and is guided by the Mercy Values of Justice, Compassion, Respect, Hospitality, Service and Courage.

All students and staff have the right to be treated fairly and with dignity in an environment that is safe, and free from disruption, intimidation, harassment and discrimination.

The SHC Student Positive Behaviour Policy details related expectations and procedures for fulfilling the College's responsibilities in promoting positive student behaviour and responding to challenging student behaviour. There will, however, be cases of unacceptable behaviour where it will be in the best interests of the College community and/or the student involved for the student to be removed from the College for a period of time.

Definition

Suspension occurs when a student's attendance at school is temporarily withdrawn, on the authority of the Principal or delegate, for a set period of time.

Suspension allows the parties involved to reflect on and enter into dialogue about the behaviour and circumstances that have led to the suspension, and to plan and/or review learning and behaviour supports to assist a student to engage positively with school and learning.

During a suspension the student's right to attend school is withdrawn for a defined period of time. Responsibility for the student's safety and welfare during this time is transferred to the family. The student is not to be on the College premises during the period of suspension.

This form of suspension is designed to allow a period of time when the College, parents/carers/guardians/relevant persons and the student involved can work together on the resolution of the problem that has led to the student's suspension. This may include reviewing systems of support in place to mitigate risks.

In all suspension cases, the College will ensure a continuation of educational opportunity by providing the student with meaningful work, and monitor the completion of that work, until the period of suspension concludes.

The enrolment agreement explicitly records at the time of acceptance of the enrolment of a student that unacceptable behaviour by a child may result in suspension or termination of the child's enrolment.

Policy Statement

Authority for suspension

Only the Principal or Deputy Principal has the authority to suspend a student from the College.

The Principal should be notified of the suspension as soon as practicable.

Grounds for suspension

The Principal or Deputy Principal has authority to suspend a student if the student:

- behaves in such a way as to pose a danger whether actual, perceived or threatened to the health, safety or wellbeing of any person
- causes significant damage to or destruction of property
- commits, attempts to commit or is knowingly involved in theft of property
- possesses, uses or sells, or deliberately assists another person to possess, use or sell illicit substances or weapons
- fails 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 engages in behaviour that vilifies, defames, degrades or humiliates another person
- consistently behaves in an unproductive manner that interferes with the wellbeing, safety or educational opportunities of any other student.

Application

Suspension only applies if the student is engaged in the behaviour referred to above while at school, travelling to or from school, is identifiable as a member of the school community or while engaged in any school activity away from school (including travel to and from that activity).

Criminal offences

Some wrongful behaviours of a serious nature are by definition criminal offences. These may include criminal damage of property, possession of a weapon, theft, assault with weapons, use, possession or distribution of drugs. The grounds for suspension are indicative only and not exhaustive.

When a Principal determines that a serious criminal offence has occurred, they will be mindful of the College's duty of care, including those owed to students who are victims or offenders, and staff.

The incident will be reported to the police at the earliest opportunity.

Procedures for suspension

- 1.1 In determining whether a student should be suspended, the Principal or Deputy Principal will ensure that suspending the student is appropriate to:
 - a) the behaviour for which the student has demonstrated
 - b) the educational needs of the student
 - c) any disability the student may have
 - d) the age of the student
 - e) the residential and social circumstances of the student.
- 1.2 The Principal or Deputy Principal is required to notify the MACS Regional Office.
- 1.3 Before implementing a suspension, the Principal or Deputy Principal will ensure that principles of procedural fairness are followed in the decision-making process, including that:
 - a) the student has been informed of the allegations or reasons why the particular decision is under consideration
 - b) the student has had the opportunity to be heard
 - c) any information or documentation provided by the student or their parent/guardian/carer/relevant person has, where necessary and as soon as reasonably practicable, been taken into account in making the decision regarding suspension
 - d) other forms of action to address the behaviour for which the student is being suspended

have been considered.

- 1.4 When providing procedural fairness to a student in accordance with paragraph 1.3, the College will ensure that it does so in a manner which does not prejudice any relevant investigation on the request of Victoria Police.
- 1.5 Prior to an internal or external suspension taking effect, or on the day of implementing a suspension with immediate effect, the Principal's delegate will:
 - a) identify the family
 - b) give verbal notification to the student and notify the family via telephone or in person of the reason/s for the suspension, the school days on which the suspension shall occur and where the suspension will occur. This will be followed by notification in writing or email within 24 hours
 - c) provide contact details for additional support services to the student and their family, as appropriate
 - d) provide meaningful school work when the student is to be suspended for three days or less
 - e) develop a [Student Absence Learning Plan](#) and [Student Positive Behaviour Return to School Plan](#) when the student is to be suspended for more than three days
 - f) provide the student and their family with a *Notice of Suspension of Students* which must include:
 - the reason/s for suspension
 - the school days on which the suspension shall occur
 - g) provide the student and their family with copies of the [Student Absence Learning Plan](#) and [Student Positive Behaviour Return to School Plan](#) (if required).
- 1.6 The Principal or Deputy Principal may implement a suspension with immediate effect if the student's behaviour is such that they are putting the health, safety and wellbeing of themselves or any other person at significant risk.
- 1.7 Where the Principal or Deputy Principal implements a suspension with immediate effect, the Principal may determine to expel the student while the student is on suspension.
- 1.8 Where the Principal or Deputy Principal implements a suspension with immediate effect, the College will provide supervision of the student:
 - a) until the student is collected by a family member or a person chosen as an emergency contact for the student
 - b) if the student is in out-of-home care or if the student cannot be collected by the parent, until the student is collected by an adult who is residing with and providing care to the student
 - c) until the end of the school day
 - d) in the case of a school camp or excursion, if paragraphs (a) or (b) do not apply, until the end of the camp or excursion.
- 1.9 Where requested, the College should provide access to counselling for the student and/or their family.

Period of suspension

- 2.1 The maximum continuous period of time a student can be suspended at any given time is five school days, unless a longer period is approved by the MACS Regional Office.
- 2.2 A student cannot be suspended for more than 15 school days in a school year without approval from the MACS Regional Office.

- 2.3 If a student is suspended for a period which is longer than the days left in the term, the College will consider the likely disruption to the student's learning before imposing a suspension that will continue into the following term.
- 2.4 If a student has been suspended for 15 school days in a school year, an expulsion is not an automatic consequence.

Return to school meeting

- 3.1 A return to school meeting will be conducted with the family before the student's return to school. The student should be present.
- 3.2 The family will be informed of who will be in attendance at the return to school meeting.
- 3.3 The family may request that a support person attend the return to school meeting with them. The support person may provide emotional support and reassurance. They are not an advocate. The support person's details must be provided to the College prior to the meeting.
- 3.4 The Principal or Deputy Principal may decide to extend the suspension if the return to school meeting does not meet the desired outcomes.

Record keeping

- 4.1 The College is responsible for ensuring all records pertaining to any incident involving a suspension are carefully recorded, filed and retained on the College records, including information on the number, reasons and frequency of suspensions pertaining to the student in order to be able to track the occurrence and nature of suspensions at any point in time.

Related documents

- [Checklist for suspension of students](#)
- [Flowchart for suspension of students](#)
- [Notice of suspension letter - via COMPASS](#)
- [Student positive behaviour return to school plan](#)
- [Student Absence Learning Plan](#)

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Date Approved:	Aug 2022
Name:	Anna Negro, Principal
Signature:	_____
Date presented at Council Meeting:	
Sponsor:	Deputy Principal - Student Well-Being
Person Responsible for Implementation:	Principal and Inclusion and Diversity Leader
Last Amended:	2019
Next Review Date:	2022
Location Checklist:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff Handbook <input type="checkbox"/> Students <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Parent Portal <input type="checkbox"/> Website

Policy Amendment Form

Policy Name:	Suspension of Students Policy
DRAFTED:	Aug 2022
Sponsor:	DP - Student Development
Major Notable Changes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stand alone policy created
Reason for Changes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MACS recommendations and template provided for use.

	Specify committee or team name	Review and approval date:
School Committee:	House Leaders	August 2022
Subcommittee of the College Advisory Council:	Wellbeing	
Student Leadership Team or similar:	N/A	

Policy Location:	Staff Handbook <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Student Space <input type="checkbox"/>	Parent Portal <input type="checkbox"/>	Website <input type="checkbox"/>
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