

# Suspension, Expulsion and Exclusion Policy

## Rationale

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga (CEDWW) are committed to being "welcoming, compassionate and inclusive communities of faith, learning, care, service and stewardship"<sup>1</sup>. Our schools provide engaging and purposeful learning environments where diversity is affirmed and individual differences are respected. Students are guided and encouraged to develop a sense of responsibility, self-worth and self-control, as well as to develop the ability to extend support and empathy to their peers. CEDWW schools seek to educate students to resolve conflicts and seek reconciliation in line with Catholic faith and belief. The Suspension, Expulsion and Exclusion Policy has been developed to support the principles and purposes of CEDWW schools as outlined above.

## Purpose

This document describes the policy, procedures and guidelines with respect to the process of Suspension, Expulsion or Exclusion in schools.

## Policy Statement

Principals have the authority to suspend a student, in accordance with the procedures and guidelines outlined in this policy. Principals may also recommend to the Director the expulsion of a student and/or recommend exclusion from the system of schools.

These procedures may apply to the behaviour of students at school, on the way to and from school and while away from school on school-endorsed activities. They can also apply outside of school and off the school premises where there is a clear and close connection between the school and the conduct of students. This may include serious incidents conducted online or through the use of technology.

## Procedures

All schools have strategies in place to maintain a safe and supportive school, with a positive learning environment. These strategies are available to all school community members.

Principals are responsible for leading the development, implementation and evaluation of school-based guidelines and procedures regarding Suspension, Expulsion and Exclusion in their school.

Principals are required to communicate these guidelines and procedures to students, parents, caregivers, members of school staff and, where applicable, the Parish Priest.

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop Hanna's Mandate to all involved in Catholic Schools.

School-based guidelines and procedures need to be informed by principles of procedural fairness<sup>2</sup>, school pastoral responsibilities and duty of care. Action to suspend, expel or exclude a student is a serious matter and should be carried out in a fair and equitable manner, taking into account the school's responsibilities to the student and to the whole school community.

School leaders need to consult, investigate and communicate with all relevant parties in a timely manner. Leaders will consider and implement processes listed below:

- Fair and unbiased decision-making processes that are evidence-based;
- Documentation of the suspension, including dates of the suspension and follow up processes;
- Verbal and written notification to parents and carers;
- Notification of parents and carers responsibility for the care and safety of the student during the time of suspension;
- Provision of school work, learning and study expectations during the time of the suspension.

Where appropriate school leaders will also provide:

- Provision of support for students (eg., pastoral mentor, behaviour support plan, referral for counselling or to a health professional, collaboration with external support agencies, etc);
- Reference to other processes such as risk assessment, re-entry meetings, return to school plans and reconciliation or mediation support.

## **Guidelines for Suspension**

**Suspension** occurs when a student's attendance at school has been temporarily withdrawn as a disciplinary measure, on the authority of the Principal or the Principal's delegate for a set short or extended period of time.

- Short suspension is a suspension from school for between 1-3 school days.
- Extended suspension is a suspension for 4 or more days, up to a maximum of 20 school days.
- Internal suspension is a suspension where the student attends school but does not attend activities, classes or shared breaks. Principals and school leaders determine whether an internal or external suspension is more appropriate for the student and context on a case by case basis, taking into account the needs of the student/s and school, levels of risk and any other relevant or contributing factors.
- Principals are required to notify and consult with the Schools Operations Manager or Assistant Director before imposing an extended suspension of four or more days.

Suspension allows for a period of time for the parties involved to:

- Reflect on and enter into dialogue about the behaviour and circumstances that have led to the suspension;
- Focus on the development of an appropriate response for all parties concerned;
- Ascertain the need for further support;

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<sup>2</sup> Procedural fairness is based on the right to be heard and the right to an unbiased decision-making process that is evidence based.

- Provide a process for a return to school or classroom, including re-entry meetings, return to school plans, processes of reconciliation and behavioural support plans where appropriate.

Suspension may occur when the behaviour of a student places the student or others at risk of harm; ongoing and serious disruption to learning; or school reputational risk. Behaviours may include:

- Violent and abusive behaviour;
- Threatening serious physical harm to another person;
- Sexual harassment or abuse of others;
- Persistent bullying and harassment of others in person and/or online or using technology;
- Possession of illegal drugs;
- Possession of a prohibited weapon;
- Involvement in behaviour of a criminal nature;
- Continued pattern of significant disruption of learning and teaching;
- Posing a risk to the safety of another person, including work-health safety.

### **Guidelines for Expulsion and Exclusion**

**Expulsion** occurs when a student's attendance at school has been permanently withdrawn from the school on the authority of the Director. It involves a termination of the contract entered into at the time of enrolment by the parent/s or caregivers. Expulsion would usually include school support for the student to transition into another school or alternative educational setting.

**Exclusion** occurs when a student is prevented from enrolling in any systemic Catholic school in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga.

Expulsion and/or exclusion are considered in situations where there are ongoing and significant incidents of serious misconduct occurring over a period of time. Normally a period or series of periods of suspension would occur before deciding to expel a student. On some occasions, the student's misconduct is considered of such a serious nature that the Director may expel or exclude a student in circumstances where there has been no prior suspension.

### **System Procedural Guidelines for schools**

Students and parents have a right to be informed regarding the reasons for the suspension, including the length of the suspension and processes for re-entry to the school.

Principals should consider whether an internal or external suspension is more appropriate, given the context of the misconduct, the capacity of the school and the needs of the student.

Principals and delegates have an obligation to ensure that Behaviour Support plans, counselling support, wellbeing referrals, or other supports are implemented or made available where indicated or required.

Consideration should also be given to whether a mandatory notification on behalf of the student/s or a risk assessment is required prior to the student's reentry to school. Some concerns may require referral to the NSW Police.

### **Request for Review**

Where a student has been suspended, expelled or excluded, parents, caregivers and, where applicable students, may request a review of the decision.

A request for review regarding a short suspension should be put in writing, setting out the grounds for the appeal and addressed to the Principal of the School and CEDWW Schools Operations Manager.

Requests for reviews in respect of an extended suspension, expulsion or exclusion need to be made in writing to the Principal and the Director of Catholic Education. These reviews will be conducted by a panel formed by members of CEDWW Leadership and Educational Services Teams.

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