

CECV

catholic education commission of victoria ltd

ACN 119 459 853

Safe and Sound Practice Guidelines (Occupational Violence)

GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Section 1 Context and Overview

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Employing authorities and school principals carry a duty of care for providing a safe learning and working environment for students and staff. They also have a non-delegable duty under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic.)* ('OHS Act') to institute measures that either eliminate risks to student and staff safety or reduce risks as far as is practicable.

Meeting this duty of care and instituting OHS requirements with confidence, consistency and professionalism requires the ability to recognise and safely respond to disruptive, aggressive and potentially violent behaviour before a crisis occurs. In addition, if behaviour does escalate to violence, it is essential to have the critical skills and support structures in place to maintain the safety of everyone involved.

The *Safe and Sound Practice Guidelines* offer advice and support to school principals in both preventing and responding to incidents of aggressive, potentially violent and/or violent behaviour directed towards staff. In the key strategies and practices recommended, some apply to both student and parent behaviours while others have a distinct parent or student application.

The Guidelines comprise four key sections:

- **Section 1 – Overview and context information** that includes definitions and terminology associated with occupational violence; guiding principles for effective practice; legislative responsibilities; and guiding perspectives from our Catholic tradition
- **Section 2 – Prevention measures, strategies and resources** that ought to be considered as part of a more holistic approach to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all members of the school community
- **Section 3 – Intervention measures and strategies** to be enacted when challenging or threatening behaviours escalate and/or in the immediacy of a violent incident
- **Section 4 – Post-incident responsibilities** that require consideration and enactment in the aftermath of a violent incident.

The Guidelines are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive in their presentation of recommended practices. The nature and severity of challenging behaviour and violent incidents in schools vary greatly, and each school has its own specificities that might require a different approach when dealing with a particular problem.

The Guidelines do not form part an employee's terms and conditions of employment and are not intended to give rise to any contractual entitlement on the part of employees.

Related Legislation

In school settings, several other legislative frameworks intersect with and have an impact on a school's response to incidents of occupational violence.

Legislation	Relationship to occupational violence and violence in schools
<i>Children, Youth and Families Act 2005</i> (Vic.)	This Act stipulates a criminally liable age (Section 344). A child under the age of 10 is not considered capable of committing an offence and cannot be rendered criminally liable for her or his actions. Between the age of 10 and 17 years, children are dealt with by the Children's Court, provided the child is under the age of 18 when the matter is brought before the court.
<i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i> (Cth) and the <i>Disability Standards for Education 2005</i> (Cth)	This legislation seeks to ensure that students with disabilities have a right to access and participate in education and training free from discrimination and on the same basis as other students. Schools are required to make 'reasonable adjustments' that are necessary to ensure this, with such adjustments including the provision of behaviour supports for students with behavioural disorders associated with their disability.
<i>Education and Training Reform Act 2006</i> (Vic.)	Section 4.3 of this Act effectively requires that school policies relating to the discipline of students be based on principles of procedural fairness and not include the use of corporal punishment. As a condition of registration under the <i>Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007</i> (Vic.), a school must have policies in place relating to student behaviour, including policies on student engagement and the suspension or expulsion of students.
<i>Emergency Management Act 1986</i> (Vic.)	This Act establishes arrangements to provide for the management and organisation of the prevention, response and recovery phases of emergencies. The Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) minimum standards for school registration stipulate that every school in Victoria must have a documented Emergency Management Plan (EMP).
<i>Summary Offences Act 1966</i> (Vic.)	This Act covers matters that include trespassing and unbecoming behaviour in or near a school. A person who ordinarily has a legitimate purpose to enter school premises may cease to have a legitimate purpose under certain circumstances. This may include students who are on suspension (unless they return to collect their books or have some other legitimate reason for returning), or a parent who has engaged in threatening behaviour and has been warned by the principal/proprietor not to enter the school. NOTE: For further information regarding trespassing, see 'School Trespass Guidelines': http://cevn.cecv.catholic.edu.au/FinLegal/Legal/general.htm >
<i>Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013</i> (Vic.)	This Act commenced on 1 July 2014. It combines the <i>Accident Compensation Act 1985</i> and the <i>Accident Compensation (WorkCover Insurance) Act 1993</i> in a single, consolidated Act. The Act governs workers' compensation insurance, payment of employer premiums, rehabilitation for injured workers, and compensation in relation to workplace injuries and deaths.

Aggressive Behaviours – Interventions

10. **Proactive networking and linking with external community and professional services** increase the support and management options available to schools when responding to challenging student and parent behaviours and incidents.
11. **Pastoral and restorative principles and practices** that reflect gospel values, Catholic social teaching and diocesan policies on student wellbeing ought to influence post-incident decisions pertaining to an offending student's or parent's ongoing relationship with the school.
12. **An adequately resourced healing and recovery program** must be made available to staff who have been harmed by violent incidents, with this program funded and supported pastorally by the employing authority.
13. **A school's incident response and emergency management procedures**, when comprehensively constructed, well rehearsed and effectively implemented, can minimise the adverse short- and long-term impacts of a violent incident.
14. **A school's incident response and emergency management procedures**, when comprehensively evaluated in the aftermath of an incident and adjusted where necessary, will reduce the risk of similar or repeated incidents in the future.

1.5 OUR CATHOLIC TRADITION – GUIDING PERSPECTIVES

As Christians engaged in the mission of Catholic education, we have access to resources and moral guidance for discerning appropriate responses to incidents of violence in schools. In addition to the wisdom of the Scriptures and the writings of numerous Christian thinkers through the ages, we have at our disposal a corpus of Catholic social teaching and papal pronouncements.

The following statements are drawn from the corpus and ought to inform a principal's discernment when confronted with harmful student and parent behaviours and when attempting to mediate just outcomes and reconciliation for all involved.

On Human Dignity and Respect for the Human Person

*Coming down to practical and particularly urgent consequences, this Council lays stress on reverence for humankind; everyone must consider their every neighbour without exception as another self, taking into account first of all his or her life and the means necessary to living it with dignity, so as not to imitate the rich man who had no concern for the poor man Lazarus. **Second Vatican Council 1965, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, n. 27.**²*

On Conflict

Conflict cannot be ignored or concealed. It has to be faced. But if we remain trapped in conflict, we lose our perspective, our horizons shrink and reality itself begins to fall apart. In the midst of conflict, we lose our sense of the profound unity of reality.

When conflict arises, some people simply look at it and go their way as if nothing happened; they wash their hands of it and get on with their lives. Others embrace it in such a way that they become its prisoners; they lose their bearings, project onto institutions their own confusion and dissatisfaction and thus make unity impossible.

² www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html

Section 2 Incident Minimisation Practices

2.1 RELATIONAL AND ENGAGING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Relational and engaging learning environments are a powerful antidote to disruptive, challenging and aggressive student behaviours. Few would dispute that student–teacher relationships, dialogue and mutual understandings have a substantive bearing on a student’s learning and wellbeing. Moreover, when learning is personalised, challenging, relevant, meaningful and directed to overcoming obstacles, the best possible conditions for learning engagement and student connectedness are advanced. The challenge rests with schools to continuously ‘raise the bar’ in improving the learning experiences that advance a student’s wellbeing and learning engagement.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

- See the following elements of the *National Safe Schools Framework* (NSSF) 2011 edition: www.education.gov.au/national-safe-schools-framework-0
 - Element 2: A supportive and connected school culture
 - Element 6: Engagement, skill development and safe school curriculum
 - Element 7: A focus on student wellbeing and student ownership.
- Refer to the publications of Sue Roffey and Associates www.sueroffey.com/sue-roffey regarding the promotion of social and emotional learning, the development of pro-social behaviour, initiatives for social inclusion and development of relational values in education and the wider community.
- Refer to the student learning and wellbeing initiatives/programs of diocesan CEOs as reported on their respective websites and on the Catholic Education Victoria Network (CEVN). <https://cevn.cecv.catholic.edu.au>

2.2 STRONG PARENT AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Strong partnerships with parents are essential for developing and maintaining safe and supportive learning environments for students and staff. In instances where a student exhibits challenging behaviours and/or repeated breaches of behaviour expectations, schools rely on parent input and support to understand, manage and change the behaviour. Parent support is more likely to be offered and effective when the parent–school partnerships are inclusive, relational and respectful.

In some instances, a student’s or parent’s aggressive or violent behavior is triggered by or linked to some adverse health, social and/or economic difficulties in their family life. The interplay can be complex and the impacts multifaceted. Effective management therefore requires diverse and well-resourced strategies that are developed and implemented both in schools and across agencies.

Active collaboration and proactive networking and linking into local community services, such as health and welfare professionals, increase the support and management options available to schools when dealing with challenging student or parent behaviours.

unacceptable behaviour, along with specifications about the range of sanctions a school may need to impose for breaches of the policy or code. The descriptions and sanctions may not prevent or curtail unacceptable behaviour but, at the very least, will provide the school with greater leverage to enact sanctions in the aftermath of these unacceptable behaviours.

Any decision to proceed in this direction ought to be made in consultation with the school's Education Board and the employing authority. Consideration might also be given to appending the Code/Charter to the school's enrolment contract with parents, thus providing the school with leverage to terminate an enrolment contract in the event of repeated and/or serious breaches of the Code/Charter.

2.3.4 Social Media Policy

Social media is defined as any form of online or web-based publication, forum or presence that allows interactive communication including, but not limited to, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, blogs, forums, discussion boards, chat rooms, Wikis, Twitter and YouTube. Increasingly, social media interactions are a cause for concern and can have harmful impacts. It is important that schools be proactive in this matter and include in their suite of policies one that addresses responsible use of social media.

The policy needs to clarify the school's expectations with regard to respecting the dignity of each person. It needs to specify unacceptable behaviours, such as posting online comments that cause reputational damage to the school and individuals and psychological harm to individuals through offensive, bullying, harassing and/or discriminatory material. The risks and consequences of breaching the privacy of others and disclosing confidential information ought to be highlighted.

2.3.5 Unacceptable Behaviours – Students and Parents

In the context of these Guidelines, the range of student or parent behaviours directed at staff that are considered serious and unacceptable include the following:

- shouting at a staff member, either in person or on the telephone
- physically or verbally intimidating a staff member
- using aggressive hand gestures, such as shaking or holding a fist towards a staff member
- writing rude, defamatory, aggressive or abusive comments to/about a staff member (emails/social media)
- swearing at a staff member
- pushing, hitting, punching or kicking a staff member (or attempting such actions)
- directing racist or sexist comments toward a staff member
- damaging or violating a staff member's possessions/property.

2.3.6 Student Conflicts and Parent Interventions

A frequently reported problem in many schools is one wherein parents attempt to resolve problems that involve their children and other students by direct approach to these students or their parents. In such instances, tensions and issues can escalate and behaviours can become more threatening, abusive and/or damaging to all involved.

It is strongly recommended that school policies make clear and unequivocal statements that conflicts and incidents between students that occur at the school ought to be referred directly to the school for investigation and resolution.

- Early and timely responses to complaints, in contexts where people feel they have been heard, are an antidote to escalation.
- Widespread promulgation and promotion of the policy and procedures, and periodic reviews of their efficacy, will contribute to shared commitments and compliance.

As noted in Section 2.3.6, a recurring problem in schools that can often lead to heightened parent aggression relates to direct parent-to-parent and parent-to-student interventions in school incidents affecting their child. It is strongly recommended that the school's Complaints policy advise parents that conflicts and incidents between students that occur at the school are to be referred directly to the school for investigation and resolution.

2.4.1 Mediation

The Complaints policy and procedures should make provision for the right of a parent to request external, third-party mediation if the complainant believes the complaint has not been fairly or satisfactorily resolved at the school level.

The selection of an appropriate mediation service is important, as well-developed skills are needed to facilitate constructive interactions and to objectively reframe and feed back the contested views.

School principals are advised to contact their diocesan CEO for advice about appropriate mediation services and providers. The neutrality of mediators (perceived or actual) in what should be a 'level playing field' will be an important consideration and in some cases may preclude the direct involvement of CEO personnel. The final choice of a mediator/mediation service ought to have the endorsement of all parties involved in the complaint.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

- Appendix 2 of these guidelines presents a sample Complaints Policy.
- See an article titled *When Things Go Wrong at School*, on the Parenting Ideas website, www.parentingideas.com.au/Blog/March-2014/When-things-go-wrong-at-school. The article offers advice to parents in the form of a six-point checklist to help them stay focused and effective when responding to their child's school-related grievance. It could serve as a useful reference for periodic inclusion in school newsletters and for discussion in parent forums such as Welcome Nights.
- See the Mediation Notes and Advice on DEECD'S Restorative Practices web pages, www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/methodmediation.aspx
- Refer to the 2009 DEECD resource, *Addressing Parents' Concerns and Complaints Effectively: Policy and Guides*. See particularly Section D, Item 10, 'Strategies for identifying and managing unreasonable complainant conduct'. [www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/commrel/contacts/POLICY AND GUIDES Addressings parents concerns.pdf](http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/commrel/contacts/POLICY_AND_GUIDES_Addressings_parents_concerns.pdf)

2.5.2 Risk Control

Principals are responsible for ensuring effective control measures for minimising the risk of occupational violence, with the control measures incorporating:

- the establishment and maintenance of a culture of safety
- the maintenance of routine work practices that enhance safety
- the effective management of conflict
- the building and maintenance of skilled and confident staff
- the implementation of a sound assessment framework when managing difficult and challenging situations.

2.5.3 Critical Incident and Emergency Management Plans

In severe, dangerous and/or high-risk incidents where physical violence is either threatened or unfolding, or where damage to property is ensuing, elements of the school's Emergency Management or Critical Incident Plan may need to be enacted.

In Victorian schools, a **critical incident** is understood as one in which there is a high likelihood of traumatic effects. A critical incident evokes unusual or unexpectedly strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with the ability of the individual, group or system to function either at the time or later. Examples of a critical incident include an on-site accident causing death or serious injury, student or staff suicide, major vandalism, sexual assault at school, students lost or injured on an excursion, or intruders on a school site who cause harm to people or damage property.

An **emergency** is understood as an event, actual or imminent, that occurs on- or off-site and that endangers or threatens to endanger life, property or the environment and requires a significant and coordinated response. Emergency management provides a process to protect the safety of students, staff and property.

Schools must have both an Emergency Management Plan and a Critical Incident Management Plan, both of which usually contain the four components of preparedness, prevention, response and recovery. School principals must ensure that staff know what the plans contain and what they are required to do during and immediately after an emergency or critical incident.

Principals are also responsible for ensuring that emergency arrangements are tested and practised at regular intervals to ensure that procedures work and that everyone learns the emergency protocols.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

- The *National Safe Schools Framework*, 2011 edition, offers an Audit Tool that enables schools to assess themselves against the nine elements of the NSSF. See Fact Sheet 5. www.education.gov.au/national-safe-schools-framework-0
- Appendix 3 of these Guidelines presents a Risk Matrix Checklist that will facilitate staff awareness and dialogue regarding safety-related matters. It will also assist principals in ascertaining how confident, equipped and supported staff may feel in dealing with student or parent aggression and violence.

4. Critical incident management plan

- Understanding and identifying the appropriate organisational responses to a particular critical incident
- Identifying practical tools for the management of the critical incident
- Understanding the legislative framework that applies to managing the critical incident

5. Understanding behavioural disorders and other behaviours associated with particular disabilities and/or mental health conditions

- Awareness of behavioural issues
- Understanding behavioural disorders
- Understanding behaviours associated with particular disabilities and/or mental health conditions.

Some staff may be more exposed and susceptible to aggressive and violent behaviours of students or parents due to the specific nature of their roles, e.g. reception staff, teachers of students with known behavioural disorders or senior staff who are required to meet with distressed/angry parents regarding a complaint. Where training budgets are limited and other constraints apply, principals are encouraged to give priority access to training for these members of staff.

SUPPORTING RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

- Diocesan CEO staff can provide assistance and referral information regarding appropriate and specialised training providers.
- See Section D of the 2009 DEECD resource, *Addressing Parents' Concerns and Complaints Effectively: Policy and Guides*, pp 22–50. The 14 skills-based guides serve as a key reference for professional reading and for assessing the skills capacity and training needs of staff. [www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/commrel/contacts/POLICY AND GUIDES Addressing parents concerns.pdf](http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/commrel/contacts/POLICY_AND_GUIDES_Address_parents_concerns.pdf).

2.7 INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT PLANS

An individual Behaviour Support Plan (BSP) is an agreement reached formally between the school, a student, and the student's parents regarding expected behaviour of the student. If required, the BSP is informed and supported by authoritative advice in relation to the student's learning and health needs.

Individual BSPs ought to be in place for students who repeatedly exhibit challenging and aggressive behaviours. The BSP should specify:

- the positive, formative purpose of the plan
- duration of the plan
- expectations regarding the student's future behaviour
- means by which the student will be supported in achieving this behaviour
- means by which the student's behaviour will be monitored and managed
- a schedule of review
- arrangements to apply following a satisfactory conclusion of the plan
- arrangements to apply if the student's behaviour is not in accord with the plan's stated expectations.

Section 3 Intervention Practices and Incident Response

3.1 RECOGNISING AND REPORTING BEHAVIOURAL WARNING SIGNS

Experts in behavioural psychology advise school personnel to pay attention to behavioural signals that may indicate rising distress and anger, such as:

- sudden changes in expression, physical activity, posture or appearance
- dramatic increase or change in the volume or tone of voice
- verbal threats to harm self, others or property
- silences, breathlessness or sighs
- challenges or resistance to authority
- withdrawal from engagement in normal interactions and activities.

When such behaviours or a pattern of behaviours are exhibited by **students**, staff ought to be strongly encouraged to share their observations with colleagues who have direct contact with the student, or who might become involved with him/her (e.g. counsellor/welfare officers, chaplain, student wellbeing coordinator). Schools ought to have procedures and mechanisms in place (e.g. incident registers; intranet file notes on student profile pages) to ensure that the reports are directed to the appropriate staff members and that formal monitoring and follow-up occurs.

When such behaviours are exhibited by **parents**, there ought to be an expectation that a staff member's concerns are reported to the appropriate senior member of staff for follow-up as deemed appropriate.

3.2 DEFUSING CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS AND BEHAVIOURS

Among practitioners in the fields of conflict resolution, arbitration and mediation, there exists a broad consensus on strategies for dealing in a timely manner with challenging behaviours. A key emphasis is on using calming, non-adversarial techniques that defuse a person's anxiety or distress and enable more rational emotions to prevail in continued interactions.

The strategies below are a composite of techniques that have been applied to school settings and contexts.⁷

3.2.1 Face-to-Face Interactions with Students and/or Parents

- **Endeavour to hold or continue the conversation in a private setting.** This will minimise the anxiety, fear and risk of harm to others in the vicinity who have witnessed the aggressive behaviour. Ensure that the relocation area is safe (i.e. reasonable proximity to colleagues, external visibility, adequate lighting, and suitable access/exit doors).
- **Be empathic.** Try not to judge or discount the feelings of others. Whether or not you think their feelings are justified, those feelings are real to the other person. Pay attention to and acknowledge them, e.g. *'I can see that you're unhappy about ...?'*
- **Clarify messages.** Listen for the person's real message. What are the feelings behind the facts? Ask reflective questions and use both silence and re-statements.

⁷ The strategies are drawn from two sources: 1) Association of School and College Leaders 2006, 'Threatening Behaviour', *Educational Leader Magazine*, Issue 15, September; and 2) the UK-based Crisis Prevention Unit (CP1) 2005, *Creating a Safe and Caring School: Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Training Notes* www.crisisprevention.com/Resources, p. 4.

3.2.4 Aggressive/Abusive Written Communications

Staff on the receiving end of aggressive, abusive communications via email, SMS or social media ought to be advised of the following procedures:

- **Do not reply** until first agreeing on an appropriate response in consultation with the principal or a senior member of staff; or
- **Reply** with a simple concise message that the correspondence/message has been referred to the principal or a senior member of staff (name supplied) for response and follow-up, which will occur as soon as possible.

3.2.5 Training Support

Training in strategies such as these are likely to increase the confidence of staff to use them effectively. As noted in Section 2.7, some staff may be more exposed and susceptible to aggressive and violent behaviours of students or parents due to the specific nature of their roles, e.g. reception staff, teachers of students with known disruptive and aggressive behaviours or senior staff who are required to meet with distressed/angry parents regarding a complaint. Where training budgets are limited and other constraints apply, principals are encouraged to give priority access to training for these members of staff.

Diocesan Catholic Education Office staff can provide assistance and referral information regarding appropriate and specialised training providers.

3.3 ENACTING INCIDENT RESPONSE PROCEDURES

The nature and severity of a challenging situation will necessarily determine responses that can and should be made. In severe, dangerous and/or high-risk incidents where physical violence is either threatened or unfolding, or where damage to property is ensuing, elements of the school's emergency management or critical incident plan may need to be enacted.

Incident management advisors consistently advocate for procedures premised on teamwork. Attempting to manage a dangerous situation alone may increase danger. It is therefore important that staff be aware of procedures and options for obtaining assistance from other staff members. In the absence of access to electronic alert systems, such options may be as simple as shouting for help or using whatever is available to create a loud noise that calls attention to the area where the incident is unfolding.

If there are other students in the vicinity of the incident, every effort needs to be made to relocate them to a safer, supervised area.

In addition to requesting that the offending person stop or desist from the behaviour, and calling for assistance, other responses that may need to be implemented include:

- enacting a lockdown (containment) or evacuation, as per the school's procedures
- relocating the distressed/aggressive student or parent to a student-free area, ideally a meeting room that is in close proximity to colleagues and that has appropriate external visibility, access doors and lighting
- contacting emergency services personnel (police or ambulance) if necessary.

- confirm in writing to the author/perpetrator of the offending material that legal advice is being/will be sought and acted upon
- if necessary, and within the limits of privacy and confidentiality, seek the support of the school's parent body.

3.4 EXTERNAL SUPPORT AND HELPLINE GUIDES

Accessing emergency services and specialist personnel increases the support and management options available to schools when dealing with challenging student or parent behaviours and incidents. Depending on the nature and severity of the situation, support people and agencies may include:

- Victoria Police
- Youth Resources Officers (Local Government/Victoria Police officers)
- Support staff in diocesan Catholic Education Offices (see Appendix 4)
- Health and welfare professionals
- Ambulance services.

Contact details of the school's service providers in these fields ought to be easily accessible to staff.

Diocesan Helpline Guide

Each diocesan Catholic Education Office has varied procedures and personnel in place for providing emergency support, advice and/or back-up services when a school is dealing with a violent or potentially violent incident. The most appropriate first point of call for school principals will be determined in large part by factors which include the people involved (students, parents or both) and the point at which assistance is sought, i.e. prior to, during or immediately after an incident.

Appendix 4 of these Guidelines provides External Support and Helpline Guides.

4.3 SANCTIONS: STUDENT OFFENCES

In the aftermath of an incident where a student's behaviour has been violent and has caused harm to a staff member:

- The student's parents must be contacted as soon as possible and be part of any ongoing procedures.
- The student must be given every opportunity and support to account for his/her behaviour.
- Depending on the circumstances and any history associated with the student's behaviour, specialist personnel may be called in for assistance in managing the student's immediate situation.
- In some instances where the behaviour of a student is deemed likely to cause ongoing harm, distress or danger to others, it may be necessary to withdraw or suspend the student temporarily from the student community. Such actions will need to accord with:
 - the school's behaviour management policy
 - diocesan policies pertaining to the management of serious offences, in particular provisions relating to suspensions, in-school/out-of school withdrawals, and the convening of a Behaviour Management Support Group to explore short-term and longer-term options for the student.
- The student may require a Behaviour Support Plan (BSP), or an amended BSP if one is already in place (see Section 2.7). Where the student already has a BSP, the school ought to enact the specified arrangements that apply if the student's behaviour is not in accord with stated expectations.

SUPPORTING REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

- CEO Melbourne Policy 2.26, *Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools* and accompanying Guidelines for Student Behaviour Management www.ceomelb.catholic.edu.au/publications-policies/policy/policy-2.26-pastoral-care-of-students-in-catholic-schools
- CEO Ballarat Pastoral Care Policy www.ceoballarat.catholic.edu.au/media/uploads/webdocuments/PastoralCare.pdf

4.4 SANCTIONS: PARENT OFFENCES

- A school's response to a parent's violent behaviour will need to take account of a range of factors, including:
 - the nature of the violent action and its impact on the staff member and others in the school community;
 - the school's stated policies on parent–school relationships and/or related codes of conduct or charters;
 - the school's Complaints policy and the degree to which it was observed prior to the incident;

Appendices

Appendix 1: Sample Parent–School Relationships Code of Conduct

This sample Code of Conduct can be adjusted as required to fit a school's policy and communications framework. Statements such as these could be considered as addendums to a school's existing Complaints Policy or to its Enrolment contract with parents.

Introduction

At [School Name] we are committed to nurturing respectful relationships and active partnerships with you as parents. We believe that our students' learning journeys are enriched through positive and reciprocal home and school relationships.

As parents, you act as one of the most influential role models in your child's life. We therefore seek your support in promoting and upholding the core values of the school community and its culture of respectful relationships.

This Code of Conduct is intended to guide you in your dealings with staff, other parents, students and the wider school community. It articulates the school's key expectations of both staff and parents with regard to respectful relationships and behaviours. It also specifies the school's position with regard to unacceptable behaviours that breach our culture of respect.

This Code of Conduct is to be read in conjunction with the school's:

- [insert relevant/related policies]
- [insert relevant/related policies]

Our Culture of Respectful Relationships

Among students, staff and parents we strive to develop the following:

- a respect for the innate dignity and worth of every person
- an ability to understand the situation of others
- a cooperative attitude in working with others
- open, positive and honest communication
- the ability to work respectfully with other people
- trusting relationships
- responsible actions.

In promoting and upholding this culture, we expect that parents will:

- support the school's Catholic ethos, traditions and practices
- support the school in its efforts to maintain a positive teaching and learning environment
- understand the importance of healthy parent/teacher/child relationships and strive to build the relationships
- adhere to the school's policies, as outlined on the school website
- treat staff and other parents with respect and courtesy.

Appendix 2: Sample Complaints Policy

This sample Complaints Policy can be adjusted as required to fit a school's policy and communications framework. The Procedures section in particular requires amendments that more closely reflect the school's structures, personnel and processes for receiving and responding to complaints.

1. INTRODUCTION

At [school name] we are committed to building a school culture that features positive and respectful relationships. As a Catholic school, these relationships are grounded in the values of the gospel, in particular the values of justice, compassion, reconciliation, truth and love. In keeping with Catholic social teaching, a respect for the innate dignity of each person shapes all our relationships.

In building and nurturing this culture, we acknowledge that students and parents can sometimes feel aggrieved about something that is happening at the school. Every member of our school community has a right to have their grievance or complaint addressed, and we will work positively and resolutely to achieve a satisfactory outcome for the people involved.

This policy outlines our principles and procedures for receiving and resolving complaints. It ought to be read in conjunction with related policies and core documents of the school, namely:

- [insert names of relevant policies/documents/guidelines]
- [insert name of relevant policy/document/guidelines].

2. COMPLAINTS RESOLUTION: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In receiving and responding to complaints, the following guiding principles will direct and shape the school's actions:

- We will work with the complainant with respect, courtesy and openness and with a genuine desire to achieve fair and reasonable decisions.
- The complaint will be resolved as quickly as possible.
- Confidentiality, impartiality and the principles of natural justice will form the basis of our complaints resolution process.
- The person(s) facing the complaint will be provided with detailed information about the substance of the complaint and will have the opportunity to respond.
- Personal information disclosed will be treated as confidential.
- Our resolution process will be grounded in sound and fair procedures for information sharing, conciliation, investigation and decision making.
- If a satisfactory outcome cannot be achieved, the school will provide the complainant with options for having the decision reviewed or mediated via an external authority.
- The communal needs of the school community will in most instances exceed the needs of any individual.

- if necessary, enable a complainant to be accompanied by another person of his/her choice as a support person
- enable the person against whom the complaint has been made to respond, and to be accompanied to any meeting by another person of his/her choice as a support person
- organise a process of mediation if a complaint cannot be satisfactorily resolved by the school.

4.4 Serious or Repeated Complaints, or Allegations of Misconduct

Where a complaint relates to an allegation of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, or when complaints are sufficiently serious or repeated, the principal will take action to report the matter to the appropriate authorities, ensure a comprehensive investigation, and work with all parties to facilitate a resolution.

4.5 Avenues of Appeal

If a complaint remains unresolved, or if the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcomes, the complainant has the right to seek other avenues of appeal through authorities such as the Catholic Education Office or [insert name of school's employer or governing authority].

Practice/Procedure	Yes	No	Unsure	Comment
Training				
We are aware of our professional responsibilities under the VIT Code of Conduct.				
Training in prevention and intervention strategies for managing a student's or parent's aggressive/potentially violent behaviour is made available to staff.				
Training in prevention and intervention strategies for managing aggressive/potentially violent behaviour of a student or parent ought to be given higher priority.				
Some staff have advanced mediation and negotiation skills.				
When required, we make effective use of expert advice and specialist services to assist with aggressive behaviours.				
Incident Response and Emergency Management Plan (EMP)				
I am confident that I have sufficient defusing strategies and techniques to calm an aggressive/angry student or parent.				
Staff have specific strategies, techniques and procedures commensurate with their role to respond to student or parent aggression.				
We have adequate/effective systems for summoning assistance from colleagues.				
The school has developed its EMP and a Critical Incident Management Plan.				
The details of our EMP and our Critical Incident Management Plan are easily accessed and well known to staff.				
Aspects of our EMP are regularly rehearsed.				
Our EMP (or aspects of it) has been evaluated and amended in the last 18 months.				
Our roles and responsibilities in lockdown, evacuation and other EMP procedures are clear and well known.				
Support mechanisms for staff affected by incidents are identified and available.				

Appendix 4: External Support

External support is available via the diocese and applies where advice or back-up services might be required in different contexts, e.g.:

- when threats of violence have been made and/or there are fears that threatening behaviours could escalate
- in the immediacy of a violent incident
- in the immediate aftermath of a violent incident
- in the aftermath of a violent incident where legal ramifications and options for the parties involved need clarification.

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