

Procedures for Suspension

Information for parents and carers following your child's suspension

- This brochure must be given to the student's parent/carer or relevant person with the Notice of Suspension. It provides the following information 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 [suspension process](#).

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 parent/carer or 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. Principals must seek Regional Director approval to suspend a student for more than 5 consecutive days. Additionally, 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. For more information see [student engagement policy](#).

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 under the following standard grounds 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.

To keep students and staff safe at school, principals can decide, in exceptional circumstances, to suspend your child for behaviour which occurs outside of school, including online, if the following are met:

- the student behaved in such a way as to pose a significant danger, whether actual or threatened, to the health, safety or wellbeing of another student or a staff member of the student's school and that behaviour had a clear and close connection to the student's school in one of more of the following ways:
 - the behaviour unreasonably prevented or impeded the other student or the staff member from participating in a school activity
 - the behaviour unreasonably prevented or impeded the other student from engaging with educational or learning opportunities at or provided by the school
 - the behaviour unreasonably prevented or impeded the staff member from performing their work or duties for or at the school.

It is important to understand that the principal cannot suspend students for all negative behaviours outside of school, the behaviour must meet the above conditions.

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*
- 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 schoolwork for your child for the period of the suspension

What will my child do when they are suspended? Does the school have to provide them 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.

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 resulted in a suspension.

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

- The *Student Absence Learning Plan* and the schoolwork 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 [student support groups](#).

For more information on what supports are available to schools see [student engagement strategies](#).

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 Department of Education website. See [how to make a complaint](#).

Who can I contact for more information or support?

The procedures for suspension are detailed in the [Student Engagement and Inclusion Guidance](#) which can be found by visiting enrolment, attendance and behaviour.

If you require additional information and support, you should contact the Community Liaison Officer at your closest regional office

by calling [03\) 9637 2000](tel:0396372000) or [1800 338 663](tel:1800338663),

or via email: enquiries@education.vic.gov.au

Additional supports

For additional support you can contact:

- Parentline on 13 22 89 (8am to midnight, seven days a week, every day of the year, including public holidays)
- your local council and ask for a list of local service providers (most councils operate youth counselling and pathways support).

If your child needs to talk to someone, you can encourage them to contact:

- [Kids Helpline](#) on 1800 55 1800 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week or [Kids Helpline Web Counselling](#) or
- Headspace via [Chat with Headspace](#) or 1800 650 890