Student Engagement and Well-Being Policy

Draft

To be read in conjunction with
Effective Schools are Engaging Schools – Student Engagement Policy Guidelines

June 2011

Principal:

School Council President:
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1 School profile statement

Sunshine Heights Primary is a well-respected government state school within the western suburbs of Victoria and the largest government primary school in the Sunshine Area.

Established in 1956, we pride ourselves on the harmony we have achieved between students from a number of multicultural backgrounds. The school’s population is drawn from diverse socio-economic and multi-cultural backgrounds with a predominance of first generation Vietnamese.

We cater for a variety of learning styles within our curriculum programs and value the partnerships between school, home and the wider community. Our teachers are also committed to the welfare of their students in their care and are constantly updating their knowledge and skills.

Guiding Principles

The school’s policies and programs provide an opportunity for all students to achieve their full academic and personal potential and to develop skills and knowledge to prepare them for a changing society.

Sunshine Heights aims to:

- foster an appreciation of the strong multicultural heritage within the school community
- provide an understanding, caring and supportive environment for children, staff and parents
- encourage a co-operative and independent approach to learning, recognising individual differences and needs
- develop tolerance and respect for others
- encourage a comprehensive and meaningful partnership between school and the community

Values Education at Sunshine Heights Primary School

Effective values education occurs in partnership with students, staff, families and the school community as part of a whole school approach to educating students.

Below are the values we believe will develop and support students in leading a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society.

‘Learning for Life’

Care and Compassion

- Care for self and others
- Consider the feelings and needs of others in all situations
- Act in a kind, helpful and generous manner towards others
- Respect our environment and creatures in it.
Doing Your Best

- Always try your hardest
- When you play and work aim to do your best
- It's okay to make mistakes so that we learn from them!

Honesty and Trustworthiness

- Be honest, sincere and seek the truth

Respect

- Treat others with consideration and regard, respect another person's point of view
- Have respect for yourself and pride in who you are.

Responsibility

- Be accountable for one’s own actions, resolve differences in constructive, non-violent and peaceful ways contribute to society and to civic life, take care of the environment
- Be organised with your time and belongings
- Demonstrate self control in your thoughts, feelings and actions

Understanding and Inclusion

- Accept others and their cultures
- Work and play co-operatively with others
- Help to make our environment safe and happy
  - Help others to join in activities and games

Resilience

- Keep trying especially when things get hard
- Be positive in everything you do
- When things happen that you don't like express your feelings in an appropriate way
- Learn to let things go and move on
2 Whole-school prevention statement

The foundation of our positive school culture is the active participation of all members of the school community so they feel valued, safe and secure; are provided with meaningful opportunities to contribute to the school; and have every opportunity to meet their personal and educational potential. A key component of the school’s approach to prevention is the ongoing personal and social learning throughout the whole school.

The leadership team regularly consults with students, parents/carers, support organisations and the broader community to ensure we are responsive to students’ social, emotional, cognitive and cultural needs.

Student voice is encouraged through participation in student leadership programs, formulation of classroom protocols and various student forums. Students have multiple opportunities to have input into the creation of their educational experience, including their physical learning environment, which provides them with a sense of ownership and allows them to feel safe and supported in the environment they have created. The school explores opportunities for our students to take on meaningful responsibilities within the school.

Our positive school culture is also predicated on student engagement being the basis for learning. To support this, the leadership team is actively engaged in developing classroom practice to ensure that our pedagogy and curriculum engages all students by recognising and responding to their diverse learning needs. Effective teaching, inclusive and engaging curriculum and respectful relationships between staff and students is promoted through professional learning teams that encourage innovative pedagogy.

2.1 Prevention Practices

Attendance

The school understands that full attendance is a key to engagement and maximises every student’s ability to learn and our teacher’s ability to teach effectively. The importance of regular attendance is continually reinforced.

School-wide behaviour support that focuses on building good relationships and allowing students to take responsibility for their actions

Sunshine Heights Primary School implements practices that aim to build good relationships that are underpinned by our shared values. This includes care and compassion, doing your best, honesty and trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, understanding and inclusion, and resilience. This underpins personal and social learning across the school and all our personal interactions.

Quality teaching and learning

Sunshine Heights Primary School has developed a whole school approach to staff professional development in literacy and numeracy improvement as part of the school improvement agenda. In this way we ensure that the strategies and approaches to teaching and learning that are implemented are consistent across the school and are based in authoritative pedagogies. The professional learning team leaders will lead the learning of members in their teams. An onsite coaching program has operated in Literacy and Numeracy.
Inclusion, Wellbeing & Transitions

The transition programs offered at Sunshine Heights Primary School focus on building strong relationships between parents, students and key personnel in a child’s learning environment. The transition programs are reviewed each year to ensure they meet the needs of the community.

We also focus on developing effective partnerships with kindergartens, secondary colleges, support agencies, special settings and other groups outside the school.

To ensure students and families continually feel connected to the school we constantly explore ways of involving parents in their child’s program.

2.2 How we support positive relationships

The school nurtures the active involvement of parents/carers in supporting each student in their academic and social learning. It seeks to foster this cooperative approach with parents/carers through interviews, reports, phone calls, meetings and the use of diaries.

In encouraging and building this cooperative approach, it is acknowledged that events will occur that compromise this ideal. When this occurs the school will use an approach to repair damaged relationships with individuals and groups within the school. Where appropriate, the school will inform and involve parents in these processes. The following approach will be used.

A restorative question approach:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When things go wrong</th>
<th>When someone has been hurt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What happened?</td>
<td>• What did you think when you realised what had happened?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What were you thinking at the time?</td>
<td>• What impact has this incident had on you and others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What have you thought about since?</td>
<td>• What has been the hardest thing for you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Who has been affected by what you have done? In what way?</td>
<td>• What do you think needs to happen to make things right?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What do you think you need to do to make things right?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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A Staged response

• This approach will be conducted in an informal way for minor incidents and be embedded in classroom teaching and learning.
• Serious incidents will require a more formal restorative session that involves class teachers and/or the Assistant Principal; all persons affected in the incident and the details of the incident will be documented.
• There will be situations where a formal conference involving the before-mentioned people, parents, support persons will be required. Any imposed consequence will be embedded in the restorative process that requires a response ‘that makes things right’ in relation to those who have been affected. To assist with this process, the school has adopted an Issues Resolution policy.
• Where a student continues to have ongoing problems with relationships and social situations, the school will constitute a Student Support Group to develop an individual plan and devise strategies and approaches to assist the student with their social learning. This may include intervention from specialist services and external agencies in the local community.

These practices are intended to move the focus away from a punitive consequence that is based on the establishment of wrongdoing. Rather it seeks to value and support those involved so that they feel empowered to take positive action to address the situation and move forward. It is about being respectful of every member of our school community, encouraging responsible behaviour and actions and ensuring that personal pride and dignity are maintained.

3. Rights and Responsibilities

3.1 Guiding principles

Every member of the school community has a right to fully participate in an educational environment that is safe, supportive and inclusive. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and dignity.

3.2 Equal Opportunity

The Equal Opportunity Act 1995 sets out the types or grounds of discrimination that are unlawful and aims to promote community recognition and acceptance of the equal opportunity of men and women and the equality of people of all races, regardless of their religious or political convictions, their impairments or their age.
Under the act it is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the basis of the following attributes:

- age
- breastfeeding
- gender identity
- impairment
- industrial activity
- lawful sexual activity
- marital status
- parental status or status as carer
- physical features
- political belief or activity
- pregnancy
- race
- religious belief or activity
- sex
- sexual orientation
- personal association (with a person who is identified by reference to any of the above attributes).

3.3 The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

The Charter sets out a list of 20 rights that reflect the following four basic principles:

- freedom
- respect
- equality
- dignity.
The charter outlines a vision of human rights for all Victorians. The charter affirms that all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights. While the charter demands equality for all, it also emphasises the value of difference. The charter requires public authorities, including government schools and their employees, to act compatibly with human rights and to consider human rights when making decisions and delivering services. These include:

- the right not to be discriminated against
- the right to privacy and reputation
- the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief
- cultural Rights.

It is important to understand that with human rights comes a responsibility to respect others human rights.

All DEECD (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development) employees must comply with the Charter and give proper consideration to human rights when making decisions. Everyone should:

- encourage compliance with the Charter
- support others to act compatibly with the Charter, and
- respect and promote human rights.

Part of the monitoring of Human Rights will be to complete the Charter Compliance Checklist on the DEECD School Compliance web site.

3.4 Students with disabilities

The Disability Standards for Education 2005 clarify and make more explicit the obligations on schools and the rights of students under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992. The standards cover enrolment, participation, curriculum development, student support services, harassment and victimisation.

An education provider must make ‘reasonable adjustments’ to accommodate a student with disability. An adjustment is a measure or action taken to assist a student with disability to participate in education and training on the same basis as other students. An adjustment is reasonable if it does this while taking into account the student’s learning needs and balancing the interests of all parties affected, including those of the student with the disability, the education provider, staff and other students.

In determining whether an adjustment is reasonable, an education provider should take into account information about:

- the nature of the student’s disability
- his or her preferred adjustment
- any adjustments that have been provided previously
- any recommended or alternative adjustments.
This information might come from the student, an associate of the student, independent experts, or a combination of these people.

An education provider should ensure that the student, or an associate of the student, has timely information about the processes for determining whether the proposed adjustment would cause unjustifiable hardship to the provider. The provider should also ensure that these processes maintain the dignity, respect, privacy and confidentiality of the student and the associates of the student, consistent with the rights of the rest of the community.

The provider may consider all likely costs and benefits, both direct and indirect, for the provider, the student and any associates of the student and any other persons in the learning or wider community, including:

- costs associated with additional staffing, providing special resources or modifying the curriculum
- costs resulting from the student’s participation in the learning environment, including any adverse impact on learning and social outcomes for the student, other students and teachers
- benefits of the student’s participation in the learning environment, including positive learning and social outcomes for the student, other students and teachers, and
- any financial incentives, such as subsidies or grants, available to the provider if the student participates.

The Disability Discrimination Act and the Education Standards do not require changes to be made if this would impose unjustifiable hardship to a person or organisation.

### 3.5 Bullying and Harassment

**Definitions:**

**Harassment** is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome or offensive to a person.

**Bullying** is repeated oppression, physical or psychological, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group.

**Cyber bullying** is a form of bullying which is carried out through an internet service such as email, chat room, discussion group, online social networking, instant messaging or web pages. It can also include bullying through mobile phone technologies such as SMS. It may involve text or images (photos, drawings).

Examples of cyber bullying behaviour are:

- teasing and being made fun of
- spreading of rumours online
- sending unwanted messages
- defamation.
Cyber bullying can happen to anyone and the bully can act anonymously if they want. People can also be bullied online by groups of people such as class groups or collective members of an online community.

It is important for the school to provide a safe and friendly environment for students and staff and to encourage care, courtesy and respect for others. All persons have a legal right to protection from harassment under the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act and the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act.

The effects of harassment or bullying include:

- poor health – anxiety, depression
- lower self esteem
- reduced study performance
- missed classes, social withdrawal
- reduced career prospects.

Bystanders who do nothing to stop bullying may be contributing to the problem by providing an audience for the bully.

**Subtle: (the most common)**

They include:

- offensive staring and leering
- unwanted comments about physical appearance and sexual preference
- racist or smutty comments or jokes
- questions about another’s sexual activity
- persistent comments about a person’s private life or family
- physical contact e.g. purposely brushing up against another's body
- offensive name calling.

**Explicit: (obvious)**

They include:

- grabbing, aggressive hitting, pinching and shoving
- unwelcome patting, touching, embracing
- repeated requests for dates, especially after refusal
- offensive gestures, jokes, comments, letters, phone calls or e-mail
- sexually and/or racially provocative remarks
- displays of sexually graphic material – pornography
- requests for sexual favours.
Extreme forms of sexual harassment will lead to criminal prosecution.

**Bullying can involve such things as**

- grabbing, aggressive staring, hitting, pinching, kicking, pushing and shoving
- publicly excluding a person from your group
- taking or breaking a person’s property
- knocking a person’s books or belongings out of their hands or off their desk
- teasing a person because of their looks.

**Cyber-bullying**

Being involved in online spaces – either at home or at school - requires students to behave responsibly. This includes:

- the language they use and the things they say
- how they treat others
- respecting people’s property (e.g. copyright)
- visiting appropriate places.

**Behaving safely online means:**

- protecting your own privacy and personal information (we used to call it 'stranger danger')
- selecting appropriate spaces to work and contribute
- protecting the privacy of others (this can be sharing personal information or images)
- being proactive in letting someone know if there is something 'not quite right'. At home this would be a parent or carer, at school a teacher.

**Students who are being harassed or bullied will be encouraged to:**

- tell the person that they don’t like what the person is doing and that they want them to stop
- discuss the matter with a student leader or a teacher/coordinator that they feel comfortable with.

Concerns will be taken seriously. All complaints will be treated confidentially and in line with our Anti-Bullying Policy.
3.6 Rights and Responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Members of the Sunshine Heights Primary School community have a right to -</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• fully participate in an environment free of discriminatory behaviour – including racist, sexist, ability-based, class-based and homophobic forms of harassment, bullying, vilification, violence, intimidation, abuse and exclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• be treated with respect and dignity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• feel valued, safe and supported in an environment that encourages freedom of thought and expression.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Members of the Sunshine Heights Primary School community have a responsibility to -</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• acknowledge their obligations under the Equal Opportunity Act 1995 and the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 and communicate these obligations to all members of the school community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• participate and contribute to a learning environment that supports the learning of self and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ensure their actions and views do not impact on the health and wellbeing of other members of the school community.</td>
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Rights and Responsibilities of Students:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rights</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students have a right to:</td>
<td>Students have a responsibility to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• work in a secure environment where, without intimidation, bullying (including cyber-bullying) or harassment they are able to fully develop their talents, interests and ambitions</td>
<td>• participate fully in the school’s educational program and to attend regularly. Students should also be expected to display positive relationships that demonstrate respect for themselves, their peers, their teachers and all other members of the school community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• participate fully in the school’s educational program</td>
<td>• demonstrate respect for the rights of others, including the right to learn, will contribute to an engaging educational experience for themselves and other students</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• As students progress through school they will be encouraged and supported to take greater responsibility for their own learning and participation as members of the whole school community. This involves developing as individual learners who increasingly manage their own learning and growth by setting goals and managing resources to achieve these goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students should, with support, be expected to participate fully in the school’s educational program and to attend regularly. Students should also through their social interactions demonstrate respect for themselves, their peers, their teachers and all other members of the school community.</td>
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</table>
### Rights and Responsibilities of Parents/Carers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rights</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• parents/carers have a right to expect that their children will be</td>
<td>Parents/carers have a responsibility to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>educated in a secure environment in which care, courtesy and respect</td>
<td>• promote positive educational outcomes for their children by taking an active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for the rights of others are encouraged.</td>
<td>interest in their child’s educational progress and by modelling positive</td>
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<td></td>
<td>relationships</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Ensure their child’s regular attendance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Engage in regular and constructive communication with school staff</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>regarding their child’s learning</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Support the school in maintaining a safe and respectful learning environment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>for all students.</td>
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### Rights and Responsibilities of Teachers

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Rights</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers have a right to</td>
<td>Teachers have a responsibility to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• expect that they will be able to teach in an orderly, cooperative</td>
<td>• Fairly, reasonably and consistently,</td>
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<tr>
<td>and safe environment</td>
<td>implement the engagement policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• be informed, within Privacy requirements, about matters relating</td>
<td>• Know how students learn and how to teach them effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to students that will affect the teaching and learning program for</td>
<td>• Know the content they teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that student.</td>
<td>• Know their students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Plan and assess for effective learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Create and maintain safe and challenging learning environments</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Use a range of teaching strategies and resources to engage students in</td>
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<td></td>
<td>effective learning.</td>
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</table>
4. Shared expectations

4.1 Schools – principals, teachers and school staff

Schools have a responsibility to provide an educational environment that ensures that all students are valued and cared for, feel they are part of the school, and can engage effectively in their learning and experience success. Sunshine Heights Primary School has developed shared expectations to ensure that the learning, safety and rights of all are respected. The expectations are intended to be positive in that they set out what is excepted and appropriate for our school community. Our shared expectations are intended to support individual students and families that come to our community from a diversity of backgrounds, communities and experiences.

4.2 Expectations - Staff

Engagement

The school leadership team will:

- uphold the right of every child to receive a quality education
- ensure the school complies with its duty of care obligations to each student as well as its obligations under the Equal Opportunity and Human Rights legislation
- Work in partnership with the Sunshine Heights Primary School community to develop policies and procedures consistent with the school values and aspirations and the Department of Education & Early Childhood Development's Guidelines
- Collaborate to identify the diversity of the school community and deliver teaching and learning, educational and extra-curricular activities, facilities, student services and community linkages which are inclusive and responsive to student needs.

Teachers at Sunshine Heights Primary School will:

- develop a shared responsibility for all students
- develop flexible pedagogical styles to engage different learners
- deliver curriculum and assessment that challenges and extends students learning
- develop positive and meaningful relationships with students that promote engagement, wellbeing and learning
- provide opportunities for "student voice" to develop a positive school culture in and outside the classroom.

Attendance

In compliance with DEECD procedures school staff will:

- promote regular attendance with all members of the school community
- monitor and follow up on absences.

Positive Relationships

Sunshine Heights Primary School will support and promote positive relationships by developing and implementing shared behavioural expectations with the school community and by delivering whole-school responses to social issues. All members of the school community are expected to participate in the educational environment with curiosity, enthusiasm and mutual respect. Sunshine Heights Primary School is committed to engaging all students and will only exclude students as a matter of last resort and in extreme circumstances.
The school leadership team will:
- lead and promote preventative approaches to social issues by incorporating student wellbeing at the core of school business;
- monitor the profile of social issues at the school and the effectiveness of implemented strategies
- provide appropriate professional development opportunities for all staff to build their capacity to promote positive relationships and relational learning.

Teachers at Sunshine Heights Primary School will:
- use the Student Engagement policy as a basis for negotiating a class-based set of shared norms with students;
- teach students social competencies through curriculum content and pedagogical approach;
- employ relationship management strategies that reflect the behaviours expected from students and which focus on supporting positive behaviours;
- build a collegiate atmosphere with other school staff to share strategies and support each other to reflect on one’s own relationship management approach;
- involve appropriate specialist expertise where necessary.

4.3 Expectations – Students
All students are expected to:
- respect, value and learn from the differences of others
- have high expectations that they can learn
- reflect on and learn from their own differences.

Attendance
All students are expected to come to school every day that the school is open to students. If students can’t come to school, they must provide an explanation from their parents/carers to their teacher.

Relationships
Students are expected to:
- support each other’s learning by behaving in a way that is curious and respectful
- have high expectations that they can learn
- be considerate and supportive of others
- demonstrate behaviour and attitudes that support the wellbeing and learning for all
- contribute to a positive school environment that is safe, inclusive and happy
- understand that bullying, including cyber-bullying, violence, property damage, inappropriate language and disrupting the learning of other students is unacceptable
- be aware of the school’s Anti-Bullying policy and Student Code of Conduct.
4.4 **Expectations - Parents/Carers**

**Engagement**

- Parents/carers are expected to support the school’s efforts to educate young people to live in a diverse world by promoting an understanding and appreciation of diversity in the home.

- Parents/carers should also help the school to provide student-centred responses by providing all relevant information to the school.

- Parents/carers are expected to actively participate in supporting their child’s learning by building a positive relationship with the school through attendance at student-parent-teacher meetings, student activities, school celebrations, assemblies, student support groups and responding to communications (including the student diary).

**Attendance**

Parents/carers are expected to ensure that enrolment details for their children are correct, that their children attend school regularly and that, when a child is absent from school, parents/carers advise the school as soon as possible.

**Relationship**

Parents/carers should understand the school’s behavioural expectations and work with the school to promote a consistent approach that supports their child’s learning, engagement and endeavour both in and out of school.

5. **School actions and consequences**

**Ongoing Relationship issues**

The school uses a restorative philosophy to manage relationships.

Where students continue to experience difficulty in building and maintaining relationships a range of strategies and responses will be utilised. These may include:

- **Discussing** the behaviour problems and reaching an agreement for future behaviour

- **Explicit Teaching** of appropriate behaviours

- **Monitoring** and **providing feedback**

- **Reflection** by allowing students an opportunity and place to settle their own emotions

- **Alternative Learning Environment** a student may be provided with alternative learning arrangements within the school

- **Counselling** will be provided for individuals, staff and parents to assist with managing serious issues

- **Student Support Group Meeting** involving parents/cares and/or relevant DEECD support staff or outside agencies (See Effective Schools are Engaging Schools - Student Engagement Policy Guidelines for process required).

- **Suspension & Expulsion** for serious disciplinary measures we follow DEECD Engaging Schools are Effective Schools: Student Engagement Policy Guidelines 2009 developed in response to Ministerial Order No.184
## References

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