

SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS POLICY

Policy Identifier: SSS201611

1. What is this policy about?

1.1 Canberra public schools are committed to providing positive and engaging environments where young people feel connected and respected, achieve success and are fully engaged in education. Student wellbeing impacts on student learning and is fundamental to a student's successful engagement with education.

1.2 This policy provides guidance for Canberra public schools on promoting a safe, respectful and supportive school community.

2. Policy Statement

2.1 Canberra public schools are safe, respectful and supportive learning and teaching communities that promote student and staff wellbeing.

2.2 The Directorate is committed to ensuring schools are inclusive places where students, families and staff feel accepted, valued and connected to their school. Respectful relationships, fair and equitable processes and embracing diversity are core values which underpin Canberra public schools.

2.3 Canberra public schools through modelling and explicit teaching, develop the skills of students to enable generational change in reducing inequality and discrimination.

2.4 Canberra public schools establish safe, respectful and supportive environments for the whole school community, by fostering a positive school culture based on positive relationships and a focus on prevention and early intervention for behaviour that may impact safety and wellbeing. They do this by:

- committing to develop safe schools through a whole-school and evidence-based approach;
- building the self awareness, self management, social awareness and social management capabilities of students to engage in respectful relationships;
- applying restorative and disciplinary measures;
- supporting teachers to meet the social and emotional needs of students in the school environment;
- supporting the wellbeing needs of teachers, consistent with the *ACT Government's Guide to Promoting Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace*, to ensure they are able to support students;
- fostering an engaging, inclusive and responsive curriculum and school environment;
- involving the school community in the development of school processes and procedures that promote student safety and wellbeing;
- ensuring schools are organised in ways that provides duty of care as outlined in the *Supervision of Students on School Sites: Preschool to Secondary College Policy*;
- valuing diversity and promoting positive social behaviour;
- providing intensive, individualised behavioural support for students who require additional support in an appropriate and timely manner; and
- minimising the use of restrictive practices and ensuring they are only used as a last resort, where there is a high risk of imminent harm.

3. Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to all school staff, parents/carers and students attending Canberra public schools and all other Education Directorate (the Directorate) staff.

4. Context

4.1 This policy reflects principles of high quality education outlined in the *Education Act 2004* (ACT) and student safety and wellbeing practices outlined in the *National Safe Schools Framework (2013)*.

4.2 A safe, respectful and supportive environment occurs in the context of schools that engage students in learning as set out in the Canberra public schools *Engaging Schools Framework*.

4.3 This policy is consistent with ACT and Commonwealth human rights and anti-discrimination laws which protect individuals from unfavourable treatment on a number of grounds including disability, race, sex, sexuality, and gender identity.

4.4 Information gathered under this policy and accompanying procedures will be kept in accordance with the *Information Privacy Act 2014* (ACT) and the *Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act 1997* (ACT). These Acts protect individuals' rights relating to the collection, use, storage and disclosure of personal information and personal health information held by government agencies.

4.5 All school community members are expected to comply with all criminal laws in the ACT, which includes, but is not limited to offences relating to unlawful behaviour involving -weapons, alcohol, drugs, dangerous acts, vandalism, violence, harassment, digital technology and sexual misconduct.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 The **Directorate** is ultimately responsible for the safety and wellbeing of students and staff in Canberra public schools. The Directorate will provide resources, supports, facilities and environments that foster safety and wellbeing of students and staff. The Directorate's Education Support Office will set policy and procedures to support principals to create, evaluate and maintain a safe, respectful and supportive school environment.

5.2 **School staff** including Principals are responsible for:

- creating, evaluating and maintaining a safe, respectful and supportive school environment as described in the policy statement.
- developing processes and procedures to address bullying, racial, sexual, homophobic, transphobic and other forms of harassment and violence as informed by the National Safe Schools Framework, in line with the *Safe and Supportive Schools Procedure A*;
- applying restorative and/or disciplinary measures where they are deemed appropriate as part of the school's processes and procedures;
- intentionally developing students' social and emotional skills;
- evaluating the effectiveness of:
 - the school's social and emotional learning approach;
 - processes and procedures to address bullying, harassment and violence;
 - restorative and disciplinary measures;and making modifications and improvements in these areas, informed by the evaluation.
- identifying Safe and Supportive Schools Contact Officers to support students experiencing bullying, harassment and violence, as outlined in *Safe and Supportive Schools Procedure A*;
- recording incidences of bullying, harassment and violence in the designated system wide student administration system as per the *Critical/Non-Critical Incident Management and Reporting Policy*;

- developing processes relating to protective action to be used when a significant danger is present that may cause injury or harm to individuals, in line with the *Safe and Supportive Schools Procedure B*;
- developing Positive Behaviour Support Plans for students with complex and challenging behaviour, including behaviour which may result in injury to themselves or others;
- developing Protective Action Plans which outline protective actions including restrictive practices to address potentially harmful behaviour in line with the *Safe and Supportive Schools Procedure B*. Refer to *Managing Behaviours Safely: A Risk Management Approach*;
- ensuring Positive Behaviour Plans and Protective Action Plans are *reviewed and updated each term as required*, refer *Safe and Supportive Schools Procedure B*;
- engaging professionals with appropriate expertise including school psychologists, Network Student Engagement Teams and if required, external providers to develop and where necessary assist with the implementation of support plans;
- minimising restrictive practices in line with *Safe and Supportive Schools Procedure B*, ensuring they are used only as a last resort and only where it can be demonstrated that all other options have been considered and wherever possible implemented; and
- ensuring staff have access to appropriate training to support them to develop positive student behaviour and respond safely to potentially harmful behaviour.

5.3 **Principals** are also responsible for:

- Seeking advice from the relevant School Network Leader and the Network Student Engagement team to assist with decision making in relation to Positive Behaviour Support Plans with an accompanying Protective Action Plan that proposes a restrictive practice;
- consideration and approval of Positive Behaviour Support Plans with an accompanying Protective Action Plan after ensuring all processes have been followed with reference to *Safe and Supportive Schools Procedure B*;
- reporting every use of restraint or seclusion in line with the process outlined in the *Safe and Supportive Schools Procedure B*; and
- compiling and reviewing data on the use of restrictive practice in escalated situations, consistent *the Safe and Supportive Schools Procedure B*, to inform processes such as Positive Behaviour Support Plan reviews.

5.4 **School Network Leaders** are responsible for:

- Providing advice to principals on Positive Behaviour Support Plans and Protective Actions Plans that propose a restrictive practice, to ensure they are consistent with the requirements outlined in this policy statement and the *Safe and Supportive Schools Procedure B*;
- supporting principals to access additional support as necessary, such as allied health professional input through the Network Student Engagement Teams;
- seeking advice if necessary from the Director Student Engagement to assist with decision making, where there is complexity in the individual context of the Positive Behaviour Support Plan and related Protective Action Plan involving restrictive practice. Refer to *Safe and Supportive Schools Procedure B*;
- responding to reports of the use of restraint or seclusion in line with the process outlined in the *Critical/Non-Critical Incident Management and Reporting Policy or Responding to Student Accidents/Incidents policy*;
- keeping records of all Positive Behaviour Support Plans with Protective Action Plans proposing the use of restrictive practices;
- working with principals to ensure Positive Behaviour Support Plans with Protective Action Plans are reviewed and updated each term as required, refer *Safe and Supportive Schools Procedure B*;

- providing links to additional supports where plans need strengthening or review; and
- reporting trends and escalating issues to the Director Student Engagement.

5.5 **Students and Parents/ Carers** are partners and stakeholders in achieving safe and supportive schools and are responsible for:

- contributing as members of the school community to the development and ongoing maintenance of a safe, respectful and inclusive school environment;
- providing input into the development and review of any positive Behaviour Support Plans and Protective Action Plans that relate to them or to their child;
- supporting the policy by behaving appropriately in schools to ensure learning is not disrupted, and the safety and wellbeing of all school community members is maintained;
- supporting schools to remain free from bullying, harassment and violence, and
- communicating with teachers or the Principal about any concerns in relation to safety, bullying, discrimination or harassment at their school, to allow these concerns to be promptly addressed.

5.6 **Director Student Engagement** is responsible for:

- providing advice and support to schools and School Network Leaders in the development of Positive Behaviour Support Plans and Protective Action Plans;
- working with School Network Leaders to:
 - develop responses to trends and escalating issues and
 - report trends and escalate issues to the Deputy Director Generals - Schools and Education Strategy.

5.7 **Policy Owner: Deputy Director-General – Education Strategy** is responsible for the monitoring, review and development of this policy.

6. Monitoring and review

The Policy Owner will monitor this policy. This includes an annual scan of the policy. A full review of the policy will be conducted within a three year period.

7. Contact

For support contact Student Engagement Branch on (02) 6207 0457 or email:

ETDStudentWellbeing@act.gov.au.

8. Complaints

Any concerns about the application of this policy or the policy itself, should be raised with:

- the school principal in the first instance;
- the Directorate's Liaison Unit on (02) 6205 5429;
- online at http://www.det.act.gov.au/contact_us;
- see also the *Complaints Policy* on the Directorate's website.

9. References

9.1 Definitions

- **Bullying:** an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons. Bullying can happen in person or online, and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert).
Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long-term effects on those involved including bystanders.
Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.
- **Cyberbullying:** Bullying that occurs through social media and/or telecommunications platforms.
- **Directorate:** For the purposes of this policy and the related procedure, the Directorate refers to the Education Directorate, ACT Government. The term is used to refer to the organisation and its staff as a whole, including schools, Central Office and Executive staff.
- **Disciplinary** practices is a set of actions by a teacher towards a student (or groups of students) after the student's behaviour disrupts the ongoing educational activity or breaks a pre-established rule created by the school system. Discipline guides the children's behaviour or sets limits to help them learn to take care of themselves, other people and the world around them.
- **Diversity** is about recognising the value of individual differences to school culture. Diversity can include sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, ethnicity, cultural background, age, religious belief, family makeup and family responsibilities. Diversity also refers to other ways in which people are different, such as educational level, life experience, work experience, socio-economic background, personality, marital status and abilities/disabilities. Diversity is more than merely accepting people from diverse backgrounds – it is about active support and celebration of difference.
- **Duty of care:** the responsibility to exercise reasonable care to protect the safety of any students against injury that should reasonably have been foreseen. This duty exists whenever a student/teacher relationship exists, while students are on school premises during hours when the school is open and while on school based activities taking place elsewhere.
- **Positive Behaviour Support Plans** are evidence-based plans, based on a functional behavioural analysis of the purpose of the behaviour in the context of the student's environment. They outline proactive strategies that build on the person's strengths, and support the learning of positive replacement behaviours and skills. A Positive Behaviour Support Plan is the primary planning tool for bringing about positive behaviour change for a student.
- **Protective Action:** describes the interventions taken by staff to minimise the risk when a significant danger is present. This might include restrictive practices, non-physical interventions and changes to the immediate environment. The danger may be from the actions of a person or from hazards in the immediate environment.
- A **Protective Action Plan** refers to a plan that guides immediate response strategies for the management of aggressive, violent and unsafe behaviours of a particular student that are presenting imminent risk of harm to the individual or others. These strategies are only used when all other planned responses have failed. It is informed by a deep knowledge of the

individual student's circumstances. The Protective Action Plan will always have an accompanying Positive Behaviour Support Plan.

- **Respectful relationships** are interpersonal interactions where all parties feel safe, are treated with fairness, are valued and feel accepted. This concept applies to all relationships, including friendships, student-student, student-teacher, teacher-family, family and partner relationships.
- **Restorative Practices** are strategies that seek to repair relationships that have been damaged, including those damaged through bullying. It aims to do this by bringing about a sense of remorse and restorative action on the part of the wrongdoer and forgiveness by the victim. The restorative approach, reintegrates wrongdoers back into their community and reduces the likelihood that they will continue to misbehave.
- **Restrictive Practice** is defined as any practice or intervention that has the effect of restricting the liberty or freedom of movement of a person, with the primary purpose of protecting the person or others from harm. Restrictive practices must only ever be used as a last resort option to prevent harm to the individual or others. They should only be used within the context of a positive behaviour support approach, and only after all other less restrictive options have been applied, or are not practicable in the circumstances. They must not be used to gain compliance in students. Refer to *Safe and Supportive Schools Policy Procedure B*. Restrictive Practices include:
 - **Restraint** is the use of force to subdue or restrict a person's movement. It can be mechanical (using an object) or physical, using a part of a person's body.
 - **Seclusion** is the sole confinement of a person in a room or place where the doors and window cannot be opened by the person.
- **Schools:** The term is used generically in this policy to include all Canberra public schools and educational programs delivered by the ACT Education Directorate for school-age students on other sites, such as Birrigai. School-related educational institutions (or *schools in special circumstances*) established under section 20 of the *Education Act 2004* are also included as part of this definition.
- **School Communities:** The term is used generally to include all stakeholders associated with a school. This may include, but is not limited to: students, staff, parents/carers, families, volunteers and visitors.
- **Social and Emotional Learning (SEL):** is the process through which students acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage their emotions, set and achieve positive goals, understand and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive respectful relationships, and make responsible decisions.
- **Student:** means a person who is enrolled in a Canberra public school or related institution established under section 20 of the *Education Act 2004 (ACT)*.
- **Student Wellbeing:** is defined as a state of positive psychological functioning that allows students to thrive, flourish and engage positively with their school and other people.
- **Violence:** is the use of force, threatened or actual, against another person(s) that results in actual or apprehended physical harm or property damage. Violence may involve provoked or unprovoked acts, multiple incidents, or a pattern of behaviour which creates a context for separate incidents. It may involve a random or a deliberate act. Threatened or actual conduct involving weapons or implements used as weapons is considered to be a serious act of violence.

9.2 Legislation

- *Children and Young People Act 2008 (ACT)*
- *Crimes Act 1900 (ACT)*
- *Criminal Code 2002 (ACT)*
- *Criminal Code Act 1995 (ACT)*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*
- *Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cth)*
- *Discrimination Act 1991 (ACT)*
- *Education Act 2004 (ACT)*
- *Education and Care Services National Law (ACT) Act 2011*
- *Human Rights Act 2004 (ACT)*
- *Information Privacy Act 2014 (ACT)*
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)*
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)*
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth)*

9.3 Implementation Documents

Including:

- Safe and Supportive Schools Procedures:
 - Procedure A – Preventing Bullying, Harassment and Violence in Canberra Public Schools
 - Procedure B – Safely Responding to Complex and Challenging Behaviour in Canberra Public Schools
- Positive Behaviour Support Plan and Protective Action Plan templates, checklists and flowcharts
- Use of Restrictive Practice: Reporting, Documentation and Responsibilities Flowchart
- Risk Analysis templates, matrix and checklists
- Schools and Family/ Carer Factsheets

9.4 Related Policies and Information

- [ACT Government Guide to Promoting Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace](#)
- [Australian Curriculum](#)
- [Child Protection Policy](#)
- [Critical/Non-Critical Incident Management and Reporting Policy](#)
- [Education Participation 2011 \(Enrolment and Attendance\) Policy](#)
- [Engaging Schools Framework](#)
- Managing Behaviours Safely: A Risk Management Approach Guidance Document
- [National Safe Schools Framework](#)
- [National School Improvement Tool](#)
- Quick Reference Guide: Support for schools to implement the Education Participation (Enrolment and Attendance) policy
- [Responding to Student Accidents/ Incidents policy, procedures and guidelines](#)
- [Supervision of Students on School Sites: Preschool to Secondary College Policy](#)
- [Suspension, Exclusion or Transfer in ACT Public Schools Policy](#)
- [Working with Children and Young People – Volunteers and Visitors \(Interim\) policy](#)