



Education &
Communities

Public Schools NSW

Student Discipline in Government Schools

Support Materials

Student Discipline Policy PD20060316
Contact: Behaviour Services Team, telephone (02) 7814 3809

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Local Educational Services staff members are available to offer support and assistance to NSW public schools.

For further information contact the Learning and Engagement Team at your local Educational Services Office or the Behaviour Services Team, on (02) 7814 3809

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of these support materials is to assist schools to revise their current school discipline policy and build on their current practice

The Department of Education and Communities (DEC) is committed to a positive approach to student discipline. Practices should foster student engagement in learning, set clear boundaries, recognise appropriate behaviour and manage inappropriate behaviour fairly.

This approach is assumed in the *Student Discipline in Government Schools Policy* and should be reflected in school discipline policies.

In evaluating and reviewing your current policy, it must be consistent with legislation:

- [*The Disability Discrimination Act 1992*](#)
- [*The Disability Standards for Education \(2005\)*](#)

Schools should also take into account relevant state-wide reforms and consider the impact these reforms may have on their practices.

DEC policies and procedures must be reflected in the school discipline policy:

- [*Behaviour code for students*](#)
- [*Bullying of Students: Prevention and Response Policy*](#)
- [*School Attendance Policy*](#)
- [*School Uniform Policy*](#)
- [*Suspension and Expulsion of School Students - Procedures*](#)
- [*Anti-Racism Policy*](#)
- [*Work Health and Safety Policy*](#)

THE DISCIPLINE POLICY

The school discipline policy outlines how discipline is implemented in the school. It will inform and guide students, staff and parents* about the aims, underlying philosophy, expectations, strategies and responsibilities for student discipline.

* The term 'parent' includes a guardian or other person having custody or care of a child. (Education Act 1990)

Principals must ensure that the school discipline policy is developed collaboratively with students, school staff, parents, caregivers and the community, and reviewed at least every three years.

It must:

- incorporate the principles of procedural fairness i.e. the right to be heard and the right to an impartial decision (*Suspension and Expulsion of School Students – Procedures, 2011, Appendix 2*)
- be developed within a strong student welfare context and reflect the identified needs of the community
- define the responsibilities of teachers, students and parents.

Four Components

The school discipline policy needs to include:

1. The discipline code (or school rules). These must incorporate the [Behaviour code for students](#)
2. Strategies and practices to promote positive student behaviour, including specific strategies to maintain a climate of respect
3. Strategies and practices to recognise and reinforce student achievement
4. Strategies and practices to manage inappropriate student behaviour.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Step 1: Form a school team

The role of the school team is to facilitate the revision process. The team should be led by the principal (or delegate) and should be representative of the whole school community. The principal remains responsible for the final decisions relating to the school discipline policy.

Team members may include:

- staff (e.g. executive, teachers, administrative officers)
- specialist staff (e.g. School Counsellor, Learning and Support Teacher, School Learning Support Officer)
- community representatives (e.g. parent groups, cultural groups)
- students
- school committee members (e.g. Learning and Support Team (L&ST) Co-ordinator, Work Health and Safety contact person)
- other agencies who work with students on school sites such as NSW Health, Juvenile Justice, Family and Community Services, NSW Police Force.

Step 1 focus questions:

- Who are the key stakeholders in our school community?
- What representation is appropriate for each stakeholder?
- What expertise is required to assist the team to successfully complete the task?
- How should the team members be selected?

Step 2: Gather and analyse information

It is important to develop a shared and sound understanding of student discipline and the revision process. Refer to the previous legislation, policy and procedures documents.

Gather and critically review welfare and discipline data held in the school and any other information that helps to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the current school discipline policy, such as:

- enrolment data (e.g. trends, visa status, refugees, etc.); attendance data (including whole day and fractional truancy); referrals to the Home School Liaison Program; suspension and expulsion data (including reasons)
- classroom referrals to executive; playground incidents (including type and frequency); incident reports, complaints and discipline referrals involving racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination and bullying (including online bullying)
- referrals to the School Learning and Support Team; referrals to the School Counsellor
- time-out register; detention register
- merit awards; commendations
- parent contact (e.g. telephone calls, warning letters, commendations, interviews)
- students with additional needs and/or disability
- student learning outcomes
- NAPLAN analysis
- referral to local Educational Services office
- Access Requests for other services
- referrals to other agencies and service providers

Step 2 focus questions:

- Are there aspects of the current school discipline policy that are not consistent with Departmental policies and procedures?
- Does the current school policy reflect all relevant Departmental requirements?
- Which learning and support, attitudinal or school community trend data has significance and should be considered in this review of policy?

Step 3: Prepare an action plan

The school team then drafts an action plan.

Step 3 focus questions:

- What needs to be done to revise the school discipline policy?
- How will each of these actions be achieved?
- When will each be done?
- Who is responsible for completing each action?

Step 4: Inform and engage the school community

It is important that the school team consults with the school community about its draft action plan.

Step 4 focus questions:

- Does this plan reflect the identified needs of the school community?
- How will community members be consulted?
- How can this data be effectively presented so its significance can most readily be recognised? (Consider sensitivity and privacy issues related to some data)
- What are the perceived causes of concerns identified by the data?
- What is the school's capacity to address these issues?

Step 5: Develop a ‘Statement of Purpose’

A ‘statement of purpose’ should be included at the beginning of the policy.

This statement outlines the aims of discipline in the school and the key beliefs or principles upon which the policy is based.

Step 5 focus questions:

- What principles should underpin the school’s discipline practices?
- What outcomes does the community want the school discipline policy to achieve?
- Are the policies, programs and practices within the school likely to achieve these outcomes?

Step 6: Revise the current school discipline code (or school rules)

The school discipline policy needs to articulate a discipline code (or school rules) consistent with the [Behaviour code for students](#) and the needs of the school community.

Step 6 focus questions:

- Do any of the core rules need to be refined to suit this school community? If so, which, why and how?
- Are there any rules that need to be added?
- How should the school’s discipline code be communicated to students, parents and staff?
- Into which community languages does the discipline code (or school rules) need to be translated?

Step 7: Revise the current school discipline policy strategies to promote positive student behaviour including strategies to maintain a climate of respect

The school discipline policy must include strategies to instil positive behaviour. These should be at the heart of teaching and learning programs and embedded in practice.

Schools should ensure positive, safe learning environments that promote wellbeing and encourage co-operation by implementing strategies that foster pro-social behaviour, positive relationships and a climate of respect. This enables young people to have their needs supported and gives them opportunities to thrive.

Step 7 focus questions:

- Which strategies identified in the current policy remain a vital part of the school's programs and practices? Which are no longer relevant?
- Are the strategies applied consistently across the school?
- What improvements has the school introduced in recent years that have enhanced student behaviour and learning?
- Do these strategies enhance student behaviour and learning? Do students think so?
- Taking into account the policy revision and the analysis of school data, are these strategies sufficient?
- How can the dimensions of the NSW Quality Teaching model support the school discipline policy's strategies?
- What other strategies should the school consider to further promote positive behaviour?
- Do the strategies and practices support and reflect the aims and beliefs articulated in the 'statement of purpose'?

Step 8: Revise the current school discipline policy's strategies to recognise and reinforce student achievement

The school discipline policy must outline the major strategies that the school implements to recognise and reinforce student achievement.

Step 8 focus questions:

- Are the strategies implemented consistently across the school?
- What improvements has the school introduced in recent years that have enhanced the recognition and reinforcement of student achievement?
- What other strategies should the school consider to further recognise student achievement?
- Do the strategies and practices support and reflect the aims and beliefs articulated in the 'statement of purpose'?

Step 9: Revise the current school discipline policy's strategies to manage student behaviour

Step 9 focus questions:

- Are current strategies and practices clear, practical and effective?
- Are current strategies and practices consistent with relevant legislation and Departmental policies and procedures?
- Does the current policy include strategies for students who require targeted or intensive support?
- Does the current policy clearly explain how students with behaviour support needs are managed?
- Do the strategies and practices support and reflect the 'statement of purpose'?

Step 10: Define the responsibilities of staff, students and parents

Step 10 focus questions:

- What are the responsibilities of staff? Consider different positions, specialist roles and committees.
- What are the responsibilities of students?
- What is expected of parents?

CONCLUSION

Ideally, schools will establish a cycle of revision. A list of suggestions and issues should be kept throughout the year to assist the school to refine its discipline policy.

Once the new discipline policy is approved by the principal, copies need to be provided to staff, parents and students.

A copy must be forwarded to the relevant Director, Public Schools NSW.

A copy of the discipline code (or school rules) must be provided to parents whenever their child is suspended.

It may be useful to place a copy of the school discipline policy on the school internet site.

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