

Student Behaviour

Inclusive, Engaging and Respectful Schools

The NSW Department of Education is committed to creating engaging and effective classrooms, and inclusive and safe school communities for all NSW public school students. Students and staff have the right and responsibility to engage in positive and respectful relationships based on valuing the interests, abilities and diversity of others.

The initiative

The aim of the Student Behaviour Policy and Procedures is that all NSW public school students:

- are supported to participate positively, and engage in their learning and in the wider community
- are supported to demonstrate positive and respectful behaviour that will contribute to an inclusive and safe school learning environment
- have the opportunity to self-advocate as active participants in their own learning and wellbeing
- are encouraged to feel connected and use their social and emotional skills to be respectful, resilient and safe in line with the [Behaviour Code for Students](#).

This overview should be read in conjunction with the policy and procedures, that outline the individual responsibilities and delegations of department staff.

Key principles



1. Inclusive, proactive prevention-focused approach

Developing positive behaviours and self-regulation skills in all students from an early age.



2. A continuum of care

Behaviours span across a continuum from positive, inclusive and respectful to complex, challenging and unsafe behaviours.



3. Explicit teaching of behaviour skills

Explicit teaching works best when working directly with students to develop their social, emotional and behaviour skills.



4. Managing challenging behaviour

Explore and develop new options and approaches for managing challenging behaviour.



5. Supports and resources: capacity building

Ensure that schools and staff are positioned to develop and manage student behaviour.



6. A specialist workforce

Targeted and intensive support across schools to provide expert guidance, advice and input.



7. Shared parent & community responsibility and action

Foster shared responsibility between schools, parents and carers, and community for student wellbeing and learning outcomes.



8. Quality implementation of effective, evidence-based interventions

Staged approach to establish and sustain a whole-school approach to positive behaviour.



9. Development of evidence and data

Continue to strengthen understanding of what works best to support positive behaviour, school performance and student outcomes.



10. Collaborative partnerships

Cross-sector collaboration to promote effective approaches and enhance service design and delivery.

Rationale for change

Suspension rates are disproportionately high for students with disability, Aboriginal students, students in rural and remote areas, students in out of home care and students experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage.

We are introducing the policy and procedures to support vulnerable groups to stay in school and ensure every student is safe, engaged and can continue learning with positive behaviour support. Supporting and enabling positive student behaviour is essential for quality learning, as well as the wellbeing and safety of all students and staff.

What's changing

- A new policy with new arrangements for suspension and an evidence-informed approach to behaviour support and management, replacing the existing Student Discipline in Government Schools Policy.
- Additional tools, resources, expanded access to specialist services and new professional learning is available.

What's not changing

- Various positive behaviour support approaches are already in place in schools, including Positive Behaviour for Learning.
- Suspension will remain an option for schools if a student's behaviour poses a risk to others.

What the change means

Procedural fairness will be afforded to all students and staff.



For schools

For NSW public schools:

- All schools must develop their own School Behaviour Support and Management Plan.
- Principals have the discretion to consider individual circumstances and context when making decisions about when a suspension is necessary, rather than a tick-box or prescriptive approach.
- Focus on a care continuum of behaviour support and management, which takes into account the nature of behaviour and consequences – considering circumstances, context and impact – rather than a prescriptive approach.
- Understand changes through accessing new universal evidence-based resources including student support plans, drop-in information sessions, care continuum explainers, and on the ground support from behaviour specialists.



For students, parents and carers

For students, parents and carers:

- More support to ensure students are supported to remain in school through positive behaviour and reducing the days lost through suspensions.

Foundational practice

All staff must:

- develop a School Behaviour Support and Management Plan that is underpinned by the care continuum.
- embed inclusive practice in all aspects of school life, supported by culture and everyday practice.
- ensure that no student is discriminated against for any reason.
- ensure that inclusion is embedded in all aspects of school life.
- seek to understand and support each student's individual circumstances, needs and the reasons for their behaviour and respond accordingly, irrespective of their response to other students for similar behaviours or incidents.
- consider reviewing current school systems and processes for supporting complex and challenging behaviours.
- begin to identify any additional professional learning needed.

Effective practice

All staff should:

- receive system support under the Student Behaviour Strategy.
- support and promote positive and respectful student behaviour.
- safely include students so they can engage positively in learning and have respectful relationships.
- strive for respectful relationships, mindful of diversity and individual student and family needs.
- model effective, inclusive, consistent, fair, equitable, and transparent behaviour support for all students.
- encourage collaborative partnerships to support student learning, safety and wellbeing.
- provide quality learning environments that are inclusive, safe and secure, and minimise disruption, bullying, harassment, discrimination, violence, intimidation and victimisation.
- actively seek and engage in professional learning that will support positive student behaviour.

Suspension is the removal of a student from a school for a period of time determined by the principal, in circumstances where all other behaviour support options have been appropriately implemented and given time to be effective but have not been successful in resolving behaviours of concern.

Expulsion is the permanent removal of a student from a school.

A behaviour of concern is defined as a challenging, complex, or unsafe behaviour that requires more persistent or intensive interventions. It does not include low-level, developmentally appropriate behaviours, such as testing boundaries and rules, which are simple to redirect and minimise through universal behaviour support strategies.

Further information and support

We are focused on supporting all NSW public schools, parents and carers, the community, and corporate staff with ongoing support for implementation. We encourage you to utilise the extensive range of **existing, expanded and new supports** available.

For more information, visit the Department website.