



DUTY OF CARE POLICY

Rationale:

- In addition to their professional obligations, principals and teachers have a legal duty to take reasonable steps to protect students in their care from risks of injury that are reasonably foreseeable.

Aims:

- To ensure that staff have an understanding of their duty of care to students, and behave in a manner that does not compromise these legal obligations.

Implementation:

- In addition to their professional obligations, principals and teachers have a legal duty to take reasonable steps to protect students in their charge from risks of injury that are reasonably foreseeable.
- Although the general duty is to take reasonable steps to protect students from reasonably foreseeable risks of injury, specific (but not exhaustive) requirements of the duty involve providing adequate supervision in the school or on school activities, providing safe and suitable buildings, grounds and equipment, providing effective anti-bully strategies, and ensuring appropriate and timely medical assistance is provided to injured or sick students.
- A teacher's duty of care is not confined to the geographic area of the school, or to school activities, or to activities occurring outside the school where a student is acting on a teacher's instructions. The duty also applies to situations both before and after school where a teacher can be deemed to have 'assumed' the teacher pupil relationship.
- The teacher's duty of care is greater than that of the ordinary citizen in that a teacher is obliged to protect a student from reasonably foreseeable harm or to assist an injured student, while the ordinary citizen does not have a legal obligation to respond.
- Whilst each case regarding a teacher's legal duty of care will be judged on the circumstances that occurred at the time, the following common examples may be times when a teacher has failed to meet their legal duty of care responsibilities to their students:-
 - arriving late to scheduled timetabled yard duty responsibilities
 - failing to act appropriately to protect a student who claims to be bullied
 - believing that a child is being abused but failing to report the matter appropriately
 - being late to supervise the line up of students after the bell has sounded
 - leaving students unattended in the classroom or ignoring dangerous play
 - failing to instruct a student who is not wearing a hat to play in the shade
 - leaving the school during 'non-face to face teaching time' without approval
 - inadequate supervision on a school excursion
- Staff members are also cautioned against giving advice on matters that they are not professionally competent to give (negligent advice). Advice is to be limited to areas within a teacher's own professional competence and given in situations arising from a role (such as careers teacher, year level coordinator or subject teacher) specified for them by the principal.
- Teachers must ensure that the advice they give is correct and well documented and, where appropriate, in line with the most recent available statements from institutions or employers. Teachers should not give advice in areas where they may lack expertise.

- School Authorities in breach of the duty of care may be liable for injuries inflicted by one student on another, as well as for injuries sustained by a student.
- It is not appropriate to leave students in the care of ancillary staff, parents or trainee teachers (at law, the Duty of Care cannot be delegated).
- It is not appropriate to leave students in the care of external education providers eg. incursions (at law the Duty of Care cannot be delegated)
- In an emergency situation use the phone for the Principal or Assistant Principal or contact the teacher in the next room (if appropriate – send another student for assistance).
- No student should be left unsupervised outside the classroom as a withdrawal consequence for misbehaviour. Withdrawal is to be conducted by sending a student to a colleague's classroom, or to the Assistant Principal or Principal. This should be accompanied by documentation and appropriate follow up. The teacher, Principal or Assistant Principal is to be contacted first to alert them that the student is on their way.

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in....

February 2018