St Peter’s Primary School
Port Macquarie

Suspension and Expulsion of Students Policy

Replaces: New Policy

Date Issued: March 2013

Evaluation and Review: March 2015
Statement of Policy
Once students are enrolled in St Peter’s Primary School they and their parent(s)/carer(s) become part of the parish of St Agnes and the system of Catholic schools in the Diocese of Lismore.

This policy embodies and guides the living out of *Catholic Education in the Diocese of Lismore, Foundational Beliefs and Practices - The Essential Framework in Parish School Communities.*

Any decision to remove a student on a temporary basis from the full life of the school will be as a result of a documented and transparent process. This process will give due consideration to the confidentiality of all parties. Procedural fairness, consultation and appropriate pastoral and educational support will inform all decisions.

Scope
This policy and these procedures apply to students enrolled in St Peter’s Primary School in the Diocese of Lismore.

Principles
- Enrolment in St Peter’s Primary School involves mutual rights and responsibilities of the principal and staff, the parent(s)/carer(s), and the student.
- St Peter’s Primary School values the worth of every individual student and has a focus on student wellbeing and pastoral care.
- Restorative practices that focus on the rebuilding of relationships are important.
- The decision to suspend a student rests with St Peter’s Primary School principal. The principal will take into account the fact that students have different levels of maturity and understanding.
- The promotion of quality teaching and learning is a fundamental obligation of all who are involved in Catholic education.
- St Peter’s Primary School is an educational community and all members are entitled to a safe environment conducive to quality teaching and learning.
- Procedural fairness is demonstrated in the decision making process.
- Confidentiality is an essential consideration when dealing with matters of suspension.
- Matters that have resulted in any suspension need to be attended to as soon as possible so a return to school plan can be enacted.
- The expulsion of a student is an option considered only in exceptional circumstances.

Definition
**Procedural fairness**
Procedural fairness includes the right to be heard, the right to be treated without bias, the right to be informed of complaints being made and to be provided with an opportunity to respond to them and the right to information regarding the status of the complaint.

In matters relating to suspension it is important that all involved are accorded procedural fairness.
Investigation and decision making
While separating the two steps of investigation and decision making may not always be possible it is advisable to do this as far as it is practicable. A suspension decision will not be made until all the facts are known, the student has had the opportunity to respond, the parents are involved and, in serious cases, the student has had an opportunity to obtain advice.

Further advice on investigation and decision making can be found in the appendix to this policy.

Suspension
There are two forms of suspension:

1. **In school suspension.** St Peter’s Primary School changes the formal learning arrangements of the student so that the student does not attend regular class and school activities for the duration of the in school suspension. Appropriate supervision and work are provided during this period in a space separated from the student body. Generally the student will not participate in special school events held during the in school suspension period.

2. **Out of school suspension.** The principal has the delegated authority from the Director of Catholic Schools to suspend a student from school. While the principal is on the school premises the responsibility is not delegated to other staff. If the principal is off the school premises the responsibility will be delegated to the Assistant Principal or the next senior person on staff. The principal will inform the person prior to departing the premises that they have the responsibility to act on behalf of the principal.

Out of school suspension is designed to allow a period of time when the school, parent(s)/carer(s) and the student involved can work together on the resolution of the problem that has led to the student's suspension. In such cases the parish priest and Catholic Schools Office will be informed and a record kept. Therefore, the student's right to attend school will be withdrawn for a defined period of time. Responsibility for the student's safety and welfare during this time is transferred to the parent or caregiver. The student is not to be on the school premises during this period.

Duration of suspension
The duration of any suspension is an important decision. Factors that will be considered include issues such as any previous suspension, the age of the student, family and personal circumstances, recognised disability, the behaviour in question and its impact on others.

Suspensions of 1-3 days will be determined by the principal without reference to the Education Consultant. Suspensions over 3 days are considered very serious and will be determined by the principal only after consultation with the Education Consultant. A suspension of 10 days or more is considered exceptional and will only be determined by the principal after consultation with the Director of Catholic Schools.
A complete record which includes the student's name, reason for suspension, the type of suspension and length of suspension will be kept at the school in all cases (see Appendix 2). In the case of long term suspensions (over 3 days) notification to the Assistant Director Education Services on the correct form will be required within 24 hours. This information is required by the Catholic Schools Office as part of diocesan compliance.

St Peter’s Primary School has a responsibility for the educational wellbeing of the student while on suspension and will put in place appropriate measures to ensure the student's learning needs are catered for during this period.

Re-entry Meeting
A re-entry meeting will be conducted before the student's return to school. The principal will inform the parents who will be in attendance at the re-entry meeting. The student should be present. The principal may decide to extend the suspension if the re-entry meeting does not meet the desired outcomes.

Parent involvement in suspension
See Appendix 1 for information on parent involvement in suspension. Questions relating to the suspension will be made in the first instance to the Principal. If the issue cannot be resolved at that level the student, parent(s)/carer(s) may discuss the matter with the Education Consultant.

Negotiated Transfer
When all other pastoral and discipline measures, including suspension, have failed to resolve an issue of serious inappropriate student behaviour, a negotiated transfer may be considered. Negotiated Transfer means a documented and mutually agreed move to another school is arranged. Generally such transfers are managed by the Education Consultant in consultation with all relevant parties in both schools, including the parish priest, and with the parents of the student involved. A Negotiated Transfer may be considered as a way of giving a student a "fresh start".

Responsibilities
While the actions detailed in this policy will apply to a minority of students, it is essential that St Peter’s Primary School clearly communicates on a regular basis to all parents, carers, students and staff, school policies on student management, complaints handling and behavioural expectations.

Clear documentation and communication play an important role in ensuring that decisions and actions are based on published principles and follow pastoral and consistent processes. Reference to school procedures in matters relating to suspension will be made in school pastoral care / welfare / discipline policies.

Record Keeping
All records pertaining to any incident involving suspension will be carefully recorded, filed and retained according to the Diocesan Student Records Policy. The Catholic Schools Office may seek information from St Peter’s Primary School on the number, reasons for and frequency of suspension and expulsion decisions.
**Expulsion**

The expulsion of a student from the community of St Peter’s Primary School should only be considered in exceptional circumstances. The Director of Catholic Schools can only expel a student after consultation with the parish priest and the principal.

Parents will be notified of the expulsion decision by the principal.

**Right of appeal against expulsion**

Students and their parent(s)/carer(s) have the right to request a review of the expulsion.

Parents have a right of appeal through the Director of Catholic Schools.

Any review of a decision to expel will reference all relevant records to determine if principles of procedural fairness were followed in the decision making process.
Appendix 1

Investigation and Decision Making Considerations

Before a suspension or expulsion decision is made St Peter’s Primary School Principal will ensure that:

1. A methodical and comprehensive investigation of the incident(s) has occurred and all available witnesses have been interviewed.

2. All matters raised in any interview/investigation are recorded in writing and kept according to the Diocesan Student Records Policy.

3. The student has been heard in the matter(s) under investigation and has had the opportunity to respond to the complaint(s).

4. The age, developmental levels and specific needs of the student have been taken into consideration in the investigation. Consideration has been given to extenuating circumstances before any action is taken.

5. The student understands the decision timeline and the steps that will be taken in any investigation.

6. Where possible a second school based adult should be present in interviews where the incident involves the possibility of suspension or expulsion.

7. As far as possible the student's parent(s) have adequate and timely information on the incident, time to assess the information and the opportunity to respond to the complaint(s). Parents have the right to be present for interviews particularly where suspension or expulsion is a possibility.

8. A letter detailing the incident and reasons for suspension is provided to the parent.

9. Parents are aware of the right of appeal mechanism.

10. The principal may decide that immediate suspension is appropriate and at times essential when issues involve possible criminality, intimidation, serious breaches of the school’s Code of Conduct or concerns about the safety of staff and students.

11. In the case of an immediate suspension the Parent/Caregiver will be informed. Students are never to leave St Peter’s Primary School premises until parents/caregivers have been notified and arrangements for the student's return home have been confirmed.
Appendix 2
Record Keeping
A yearly record is to be kept at St Peter’s Primary School which includes the following information:

- Year
- Student name
- Class teacher
- Date of suspension
- Length of suspension
- Reason for suspension
- Date of re-entry meeting
- This was the student’s [ ] suspension
- Location of all correspondence

The Catholic Schools Office will require St Peter’s Primary School to produce suspension data.

**Student Suspension Record Short term suspension (1-3 days)**
Suspensions of 1-3 days will be determined by the principal without reference to the Education Consultant.

**Student Suspension Record Long term suspension (4-10 days)**
Suspensions of 4 days to 10 days are considered very serious and will be determined by the principal only after consultation with the Education Consultant.
Long term suspensions will be recorded on the appropriate form in the Violence on Schools Package. A copy will be forwarded to the Assistant Director Education Services within 24 hours and a copy will be kept at the school. Also included in the Violence in Schools Package are copies of correspondence relating to suspension decisions.

**Student Expulsion Record**
A record is kept at St Peter’s Primary School of expulsion decisions. The record includes:

- Student name
- Class teacher
- Date of expulsion
- Reason for expulsion
- Date Director and Parish Priest first notified of concerns
- Location of all correspondence