MY CHILD HAS BEEN SUSPENDED, WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Suspension is a disciplinary measure that involves temporary removal of a student from classes or school approved activities for a specified period of time. Your child will be allowed to return to class or the school approved activity after the set period of suspension.

WHAT WILL THE PRINCIPAL HAVE CONSIDERED BEFORE SUSPENSION?

Before a student can be suspended, the principal must ensure that:

- The student has had the opportunity to be heard
- Any information or documentation provided by the student or their relevant person has been taken into account in making the decision regarding suspension
- Other forms of action to address the behaviour for which the student is being suspended have been considered.

WHAT IS AN IMMEDIATE SUSPENSION?

Immediate suspensions can occur only if a student behaves in such a way that would provide the basis for a suspension ordinarily, and their behaviour is such that they are putting the health, safety and wellbeing of themselves, staff or other students at significant risk.

If the principal has determined that an immediate suspension is appropriate in the circumstances, school staff should have attempted to immediately notify you of this decision, and the need to collect your child as soon as is practicable.

If you were not able to be contacted and/or you were unable to make arrangements for the collection of your child, the principal should have made arrangements for your child to be adequately supervised until the end of the school day or the conclusion of the school approved activity.

It is important to remember that even though the time frames for an immediate suspension differ from a suspension implemented under normal circumstances, the process is the same and the principal must ensure that your child has had the opportunity to be heard and that his or her circumstances are taken into account.

HOW LONG CAN MY CHILD BE SUSPENDED FOR?

The maximum continuous period of time a student may be suspended at any one time is 5 school days.

In addition, a student cannot be suspended for more than 15 days in a school year without written approval from the Regional Director.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM NOT SURE IF MY CHILD’S BEHAVIOUR WARRANTED A SUSPENSION?

Every school is required to have a Student Engagement Policy which sets out the school community’s shared expectation in the areas of student engagement, respectful behaviour, attendance and acts as a reference point for how your school will respond to individual student circumstance.
You may also like to ask your school for a copy of their Student Engagement Policy or you can check their website to access it. This policy will set out the behavioural expectations within your school and will be a useful reference point in determining whether these expectations have been breached. [www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/engagepol.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/engagepol.aspx)

Suspensions are a serious disciplinary measure and are best reserved for incidents when other measures have not produced a satisfactory outcome.

Your child can be suspended if, whilst attending school or travelling to or from school or engaged in any school activity away from the school (including travel to or from that activity), they –

- Behave in such a way as to pose a danger, whether actual, perceived or threatened, to the health, safety or wellbeing of any person;
- Cause significant damage to or destruction of property;
- Commit or attempts to commit or is knowingly involved in the theft of property;
- Possess, use or sell or deliberately assist another person to possess, use or sell illicit substances or weapons;
- Fail to comply with any clear and reasonable instruction of a staff member so as to pose a danger, whether actual, perceived or threatened, to the health, safety or wellbeing of any person;
- Consistently engage in behaviour that vilifies, defames, degrades or humiliates another person based on age; breastfeeding; gender; identity; impairment; industrial activity; lawful sexual activity; marital status; parental status; physical features; political belief or activity; pregnancy; race; religious belief or activity; sexual orientation; personal association (whether as a relative or otherwise) with a person who is identified by reference to any of the above attributes;
- Consistently behave in an unproductive manner that interferes with the wellbeing, safety or educational opportunities of any other student.

It is the principal’s responsibility to determine whether to suspend a student in any specific circumstances. If you have any concerns about the suspension process or your child’s behaviour, you are encouraged to contact the principal to discuss your child, your concerns, and the reasons and grounds for the suspension.

It is important to remember that you can request a meeting with the principal at any point during a suspension process, even if the suspension has already been implemented.

If you do not feel your concerns have been addressed, you can contact the Community Liaison Officer in your closest departmental regional office or one of the other support services listed at the end of this brochure.

**WHAT IS AN IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION? WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR MY CHILD?**

An in-school suspension means that a student remains on school grounds under supervision but does not attend class. This may include:

- Pairing the student up with an experienced teacher or appropriate staff member for the day and accompanying that teacher to classes
- Participating in a work-based in-school suspension (e.g. working outdoors or preparation of educational materials)
- Providing a dedicated room or area where students can complete their in-school suspension under appropriate supervision.

It may also take on a different form depending on the particular school and circumstances.

It is important to remember that whilst this is different from a traditional ‘out-of-school’ suspension, the process for both is the same and you should receive the same notification and documentation.

**WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD THE SCHOOL PROVIDE ME WITH WHEN SUSPENDING MY CHILD?**

When a principal determines that a suspension is appropriate, the school must provide both you and your child with the following documents:

- Notice of Suspension and
- This brochure.

The principal should also provide you with the following information:

- The reasons for the suspension
- The school days on which the suspension will occur
- Where the suspension will occur (i.e. on school premises or otherwise)
The contact details for additional support services for you and your child as appropriate

The arrangements made for the provision of appropriate school work for your child for the period of the suspension.

Notes:
(1) If your child is suspended for 3 days or less, the principal should ensure that he or she is provided with meaningful work to complete whilst they are absent from school.
(2) If your child has been suspended for more than 3 days, the principal should ensure that a Student Absence Learning Plan and a Return to School Plan are provided.

WHAT WILL MY CHILD DO WHEN THEY ARE SUSPENDED? DOES THE SCHOOL HAVE TO PROVIDE HIM/HER WITH WORK?

It is expected that for a suspension of three days or under, a student is given meaningful work to complete. If a student is suspended for over three days, it is expected that a Student Absence Plan and a Return to School Plan are developed. Templates of these plans can be found at www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/resources.aspx

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE END OF THE SUSPENSION?

Once the period of suspension has ended, your child should be supported to return to school.

If your child has been suspended for a period of three or more school days, it is recommended that a post-suspension Student Support Group meeting be held with the school, you and your child. You can also request that a Student Support Group meeting is held if you feel your child needs additional support when returning to school or to address any behavioural issues that may have led to the incident that result in a suspension.

The purpose of this meeting is to provide an opportunity to discuss the following:
- The Student Absence Learning Plan and the school work completed during the period of suspension
- The strategies to be developed within and outside of the school to meet the educational, social and emotional needs of your child
- The respective responsibilities of you, your child, the school staff and other professionals in supporting these strategies.

For more information on Student Support Group meetings see www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/participation/Pages/supportgroups.aspx

For more information on what supports are available to schools see Strategies and Supports Available to Schools www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/interventions.aspx

CAN I APPEAL A SUSPENSION?

There is no process for appealing a suspension.

If you have any concerns about your child’s suspension, you should immediately discuss these concerns with the school principal.

If you do not believe that your concerns have been adequately addressed by the school principal, you may contact the Community Liaison Officer at your local regional office.

If you still believe that your concerns have not been adequately addressed by the regional office, you can write to your Regional Director or the Deputy Secretary, Regional Support Group to lodge a formal complaint.

Additional information, phone numbers and further contact details regarding parent complaints can be found on the DEECD website at www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/parentcomplaint.htm

WHO CAN I CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION OR SUPPORT?

The procedures for suspension and expulsion are detailed in the Student Engagement and Inclusion Guidance which can be found by visiting: www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/studengage.aspx

FAQs for parents regarding suspension and expulsion are available at: www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/behaviour/Pages/faqs.aspx

If you require additional information and support, you should contact the Community Liaison Officer at your closest regional office (contact details next page).
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT
REGIONAL OFFICES

NORTH EASTERN VICTORIA REGION
Email: nevr@edumail.vic.gov.au

Benalla
Post: PO Box 403, Benalla, Victoria 3672
Location: 150 Bridge Street East, Benalla, Victoria 3672
Phone: (03) 5761 2100
Fax: (03) 5762 5039

Glen Waverley
Location: Level 3, 295 Springvale Road, Glen Waverley 3150, Victoria
Phone: (03) 9265 2400
Fax: (03) 9265 2444

NORTH WESTERN VICTORIA REGION
Email: nwvr@edumail.vic.gov.au

Bendigo
Post: PO Box 442, Bendigo, Victoria 3552
Location: 7-15 McLaren Street, Bendigo, Victoria 3550
Phone: (03) 5440 3111
Fax: (03) 5442 5321

Coburg
Post: Locked Bag 2001, Coburg, VIC 3058
Location: Level 2, 189 Urquhart Street, Coburg, VIC 3058
Phone: (03) 9488 9488
Fax: (03) 9488 9400

SOUTH EASTERN VICTORIA REGION
Email: sevr@edumail.vic.gov.au

Dandenong
Post: PO Box 5, Dandenong 3175
Location: 165-169 Thomas Street, Dandenong 3175
Phone: (03) 8765 5600
Fax: (03) 8765 5666

Moe
Post: PO Box 381, Moe, Victoria 3825
Location: Corner Kirk and Haigh Streets, Moe, Victoria 3825
Phone: (03) 5127 0400
Fax: (03) 5126 1933

SOUTH WESTERN VICTORIA REGION
Email: swvr@edumail.vic.gov.au

Ballarat
Location: 109 Armstrong Street North, Ballarat, 3350
Phone: (03) 5337 8444
Fax: (03) 5333 2135

West Footscray
Location: Level 3, Whitten Oval, 417 Barkly Street, West Footscray, 3012
(Entry via glass sliding doors)
Phone: (03) 9291 6500
Fax: (03) 9291 6565

Geelong
Post: PO Box 2086, Geelong, Victoria 3220
Location: 5A Little Ryrie Street, Geelong, Victoria 3220
Phone: (03) 5225 1000
Fax: (03) 5225 1099
ADDITIONAL AVAILABLE SUPPORT

**Parentline Victoria**
Phone: 13 22 89 - 8am to midnight 7 days a week
Parentline provides a statewide telephone counselling service to parents and carers of children aged from birth to eighteen years.

**Parents Victoria**
Phone: (03) 9380 2158 or 1800 032 023 (rural callers only)
Website: www.parentsvictoria.asn.au

**Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc.**
Phone: (03) 9416 3833
Website: wwwvaeai.org.au

**Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services**
Phone: 1300 767 299
Website: www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth/services/child/

**Children's Protection Society**
Phone: (03) 9450 0900
Website: www.cps.org.au

**Australian Childhood Foundation**
Phone: (03) 9874 3922
Website: www.childhood.org.au/website/default.asp

**Association of School Councils in Victoria**
Phone: (03) 9808 2499
Website: www.asciv.org.au/ASCIV/Welcome.html

**Victorian Council of School Organisations**
Phone: (03) 9429 5900
Website: www.viccso.org.au/

**Victorian Multicultural Commission**
Phone: (03) 9208 3184
Website: www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/