Ascot Vale Primary School is in the process of updating our ‘Welfare and Discipline’ policy with a ‘Student Engagement’ policy. This will include extensive consultation within the school community and be in line with department procedures and guidelines, especially the ‘Effective Schools are Engaging Schools’ document that promotes student engagement, attendance and positive behaviours. Each classroom teacher is responsible for the development of strategies consistent with the school’s code of conduct. The breaches of these and school rules are clearly defined and applied. Where a student is building up a history of unsatisfactory behaviour parents are notified with a view to negotiating an agreed approach to solve issues.

It is within this context and that of the AVPS ‘Engagement Policy’ that suspension is viewed as a serious disciplinary measure and should normally only be used when other measures have not produced a satisfactory response.

Suspension should be used for the shortest time necessary. The maximum continuous time a student can be suspended at any one time is five school days. A student cannot be suspended for more than fifteen school days in a school year without approval from the regional director. The principal is required to seek secondary consultation and/or direct intervention support from their regional office to address the behavioural concerns for a student who has been suspended for eight days in a school year or who reaches a total of four individual suspensions in a school year. However, a student may not be suspended for a further period (not exceeding ten school days) pending the principal’s decision whether to expel a student. The principal has responsibility for student suspensions.

Procedures before Suspension

Principals must utilise a staged response to any attendance or behavioural issues. A student support group should be convened to inform the student and their parents/carers that a suspension is being considered. The aim of this group meeting is to identify any issues that are of concern to the school or the student and begin a process of effective communication between the school, the student and their parents/carers. The student support group should develop a range of strategies to support the student and the parents/carers in addressing the issue of concern, aimed at avoiding the suspension of the student. This may include:

- The student’s behaviour and performance.
- The strategies being developed within the school to meet the educational needs of the student.
- The possibility of suspension, should that behaviour continue.
- The responsibilities of the parents / guardians, should the suspension be considered necessary.

The parent / guardian may, at the principal’s discretion, be accompanied at that meeting by another person.
**Procedures for suspension.**

A principal may suspend a student if, while 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), the student:

a) behaves in such a way as to threaten or constitute a danger to the health, safety or wellbeing of any person; or
b) commits an act of significant violence against a person or causes significant damage to or destruction of property; is knowingly involved in the theft of property; or
c) possesses, uses, or deliberately assists another person to use prohibited drugs or substances; or
d) fails to comply with any reasonable and clearly communicated instruction of a principal, teacher or other staff member; or
e) consistently behaves in a manner that interferes with the wellbeing, safety or educational opportunities of any other student; or
f) consistently engages 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 or status as a carer; 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.

In determining whether to suspend a student, the principal must ensure that suspending the student is appropriate to:

- the behaviour for which the student is being suspended
- the educational needs of the student
- any disability or additional learning need of the student
- the age of the student
- the residential and social circumstances of the student.

**Post decision to suspension**

The principal must provide the student, their parents/carers and the school council president with a Notice of Suspension (see Element 5, Appendix 13) prior to the day on which the suspension commences that must include:

- the summary of outcomes of previous actions that have been undertaken by the school to support the student
- the reasons for the suspension
- the school days on which the suspension shall occur
- details of the post-suspension student support group meeting, if the suspension is for five days
- copies of the Student Absence Learning Plan and Return to School Plan (as appropriate).

The principal must provide the student and their parents/carers with a copy of the information brochure *Procedures for Suspension*.

The suspension conference has been replaced by the Student Support Group. Principals can convene a student support group at any time, but a student support group must be held in the following circumstances:

- when a student requires additional support, in line with a staged response
- prior to suspension, in order to inform the student and parents/carers that a suspension is being considered
- post-suspension if the suspension is for five days.

**References:**
Process for immediate suspension:

The principal may suspend a student immediately and prior to convening a student support group meeting if the 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.

The principal must provide supervision to the student until they can be collected from school by a parent/carer or until the end of the school day.

When the suspension is immediate, the principal must:

- give immediate verbal notification to the student and their parents/carers
- immediately schedule a student support group meeting (this meeting must be held within 48 hours of the student being suspended)
- provide the student and their parents/carers with a Notice of Suspension and a copy of the information brochure Procedures for Suspension
- develop a Student Absence Learning Plan and a Return to School plan (as appropriate) at the student support group meeting
- schedule a post-suspension student support group meeting if the suspension is for five days.