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Suspension, Expulsion and Exclusion Policy

PURPOSE

The Diocese serves the people of God 'through her witness and through such activities as dialogue, human promotion, commitment to justice and peace, education and the care of the sick, and aid to the poor and children' (*Redemptoris Missio*, 1990, n.20).

Diocese of Lismore Catholic Schools Limited (DLCSL) acknowledges that there will be some instances where student behaviour is such that, in the best interests of the student and/or the community, it is appropriate to suspend the student from a school for a temporary period of time; to expel a student permanently or conditionally; to transfer the student to a different educational setting within the diocesan system of schools; or, in some instances, to exclude the student from all Catholic schools in the Diocese of Lismore. The safety and wellbeing of the students, parents, employees, contractors and volunteers in diocesan schools is always paramount.

APPLICATION

This policy applies to all persons engaged by DLCSL, including but not limited to employees, contractors and volunteers of DLCSL. It outlines the obligations, responsibilities and standard of behaviour required in the context of student suspensions, expulsions and exclusions to uphold the values, integrity and reputation of the Catholic Church, DLCSL, Catholic Schools Office (CSO) and all Catholic schools in the Diocese of Lismore.

Employees, contractors and volunteers are to make themselves familiar with the requirements of this document and ensure they comply with the behaviours and obligations outlined within it.

This policy does not form part of any employment contract or contractor agreement and does not impose contractual obligations on DLCSL.

POLICY

Suspension is a temporary removal of a student from all of the classes that a student would normally attend at a school for a set period of time. Expulsion is the permanent removal of a student from one particular school. Exclusion is the act of preventing a student's admission to other Catholic schools within the Diocesan school system.

DLCSL recognises that each individual school has a special responsibility for the pastoral care of students. DLCSL aims to ensure that all students, their families, employees, contractors and volunteers within the Diocese of Lismore have the right to a safe and supportive learning environment and that all members of the school community share the responsibility to teach, foster, promote and encourage positive student behaviour.

In order to achieve this outcome, DLCSL is committed to providing resources to schools to encourage and enable practices that support appropriate student behaviours and prevent inappropriate behaviours, in order to create a positive school environment which enhances learning.

It is the intent of DLCSL that any disciplinary action will allow students time to reflect on their behaviour, to acknowledge and accept responsibility for the behaviours which led to the disciplinary action and to accept responsibility for changing their behaviour to meet the school's expectations in the future.

It is DLCSL policy that procedures for the suspension, expulsion or exclusion of a student are based on the principles of procedural fairness.

Any decision to remove a student on a temporary or permanent basis from the full life of a school will be a result of a documented and transparent process. The Director of Catholic Schools must approve any expulsions or exclusions from Catholic schools in the Diocese of Lismore. This process will give due consideration to the confidentiality of all parties.

Schools must also take into consideration the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) when making decisions about the suspension, expulsion or exclusion of a student, for example if a student's disability caused or contributed to the incident that resulted in the disciplinary action being contemplated.

DLCSL acknowledges the right of a parent/carer or student to request a review or to appeal a suspension, expulsion or exclusion decision.

RATIONALE

DSCSL recognises the need to provide transparency around the procedures to be followed when making a decision about the suspension, expulsion or exclusion of a student.

Procedural fairness aids in decision making, promotes confidence in the procedure and the decision made and gives due respect to the individual involved.

OUTCOMES

It is the intent of DLCSL that disciplinary practices carried out in schools are based on restorative practice principles and are respectful of the dignity, rights and fundamental freedom of individual students. These practices are focused on maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment for all. Major disciplinary sanctions are last resort actions which are only utilised with due process in the event of serious breaches of individual school's discipline policy.

This policy is a direction to all DLCSL employees, contractors and volunteers. This policy must be complied with, and a breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or cessation of any other engagement with DLCSL.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Catholic Education in the Diocese of Lismore: The Mission of Jesus Christ Foundational Values

Diocese of Lismore: Violence in Schools Support Package

Suspension, Expulsion and Exclusion Procedures

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)

Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cth)

Education Act 1990 (NSW)

NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) Registration Systems and Member Non-government Schools (NSW) Manual