

ESSEX HEIGHTS PRIMARY SCHOOL

DUTY OF CARE POLICY

All Essex Heights Primary School staff will be made aware of their legal responsibilities. As part of the government school principal contract, government school principals are required to plan, implement and monitor arrangements to ensure the safety, security and wellbeing of students.

Definition

Whenever a student–teacher relationship exists, the teacher has a special duty of care. This is defined as: “A teacher is to take such measures as are reasonable in the circumstances to protect a student under the teacher’s charge from risks of injury that the teacher should reasonably have foreseen.” (*Richards v State of Victoria* (1969) VR 136 at p. 141) As part of that duty, teachers are required to supervise students adequately. This requires not only protection from known hazards, but also protection from those that could arise (that is, those that the teacher should reasonably have foreseen) and against which preventive measures could be taken.

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.

Schools normally satisfy the duty of care by allocating responsibilities to different staff. For example, the principal is responsible for making and administering such arrangements for supervision as are necessary according to the circumstances in each school, and teachers are responsible for carrying out their assigned supervisory duties in such a way that students are, as far as can be reasonably expected, protected from injury. This duty extends to intervention in single-sex areas if need be by a teacher of the other gender.

Rationale:

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.

At EHPS we will 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.

Guidelines:

- 1.0 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 as well as providing safe and suitable buildings, grounds and equipment.

- 2.0 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.
- 3.0 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.

4.0 **Classroom Supervision**

- 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 for example 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.

5.0 **Movement of Students**

- Care needs to be taken in allowing students to leave the room to work in other areas of the school.
- Use of students as monitors outside the room during class time must only occur with the approval of the Principal or Assistant Principal
- Discretion is to be used when allowing students to visit the toilet or the Resource Centre during class time.

6.0 **Yard supervision**

- Yard supervision is an essential element in teachers' duty of care. It is now clearly established that in supervising students, teacher's duty of care is one of positive action.
- Be aware that students are usually less constrained and more prone to accident and injury than in a more closely supervised classroom.
- Be aware that yard duty supervision within the school requires the teacher to fully comply with DEECD guidelines and brings with it an increased duty of

care. It is a teacher's responsibility to be aware of these guidelines and duty of care responsibilities. Teachers are also expected to follow school policy whilst on yard duty.

- Teachers rostered for duty are to attend the designated area at the time indicated on the roster.
- Teachers on duty are to remain in the designated area until the end of the break period or until replaced by the relieving teacher, whichever is applicable
- The handing over of duty from one teacher to another must be quite definite and **must occur in the area of designated duty**. Where a relieving teacher does not arrive for duty, the teacher currently on duty should send a message to the office, **but not leave the area until replaced**.
- No changes to the yard duty roster are to be made without the approval of the Daily organiser, or Assistant Principal.
- Teachers must be alert and vigilant to intervene **immediately** if potentially dangerous behaviour is observed in the yard and to enforce behaviour standards and logical consequences for breaches of safety rules.
- Teachers should always be on the move and highly visible.

6.0 Excursions, Incursions and Camps

6.1 Teachers must:

- Be aware that students are usually less constrained and more prone to accident and injury than in a more closely supervised classroom.
- Be aware that an incursion with an external provider does not absolve supervision duties of the teacher, including first aid duties. A teacher must be present at all times and remain the person designated with duty of care responsibilities.
- Be aware that camps and excursions outside the school require the teacher to fully comply with DEECD guidelines and bring with it an increased duty of care. It is a teacher's responsibility to be aware of these guidelines and remain the person designated with duty of care.
- Be aware that excursion and camp activities require the teacher to ensure that the venue and transport adhere to DEECD guidelines.
- Be aware that school policy is for students to be counted on and off transport and at other times on a regular basis whilst on excursion or camp activities.

6.2 The teacher in charge will have copies of all confidential medical forms and permission notes with contact details. A copy of this material will also be kept at school.

6.3 Arrangements will be made for students not attending to continue their normal program at school under supervision of another classroom teacher.

- 6.4 The teacher in charge or designated teacher of an excursion or camp will carry a mobile phone and a first aid kit.
- 6.5 If the return time from an excursion or camp is delayed, the teacher in charge will contact the school to inform the Principal of the new arrival time so that parents can be contacted and a senior staff member will remain at school until they arrive.
- 6.6 If crossing roads, students are to use designated crossing points. Staff are to walk to the middle of the crossing to ensure visibility and orderly crossing. Other staff will control the flow of students across the road.
- 6.7 All staff must follow the DEECD guidelines when organising an excursion, incursion or camp. All procedural steps contained in the School camping, excursions and incursions Policy and Procedure outlines must also be followed.

7.0 **Informing Staff of the legislative liability of Duty of Care**

All staff will be informed of their legal requirement via:

- A copy of this document will be made available to each member of staff at the first staff meeting at the commencement of the school year, and will be placed on the intranet.
- New staff will be informed of their Duty of Care as part of the school's Induction Program
- Duty of Care will be an agenda item at staff meetings and staff will be directed to familiarise themselves with section Student Safety of the DEECD School's Policy Advisory Guide.
- Staff will complete a risk assessment including duty of care when completing planning for camps, excursions and incursions.
- Staff will be directed to the EHPS Student Wellbeing and Engagement policy annually.

8.0 **References:**

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/dutyofcare.aspx>

9.0 **Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's evaluation process.

Andrew Crossett

Principal

May 2014

Trevor Sharrock

School Council President