



PASTORAL CARE POLICY

RATIONALE

A fundamental belief for Catholic schools is that in Jesus is seen God's image and likeness in its human expression, and that Jesus' values and teachings show all people 'the way, the truth and the life' (*John 14:6*). In accordance with this belief, values to be promoted within a Catholic school's understanding and practice of pastoral care include love, respect, compassion, tolerance, forgiveness, repentance, reconciliation and justice.

Mercedes College has a vision that calls us to create a caring community where students and staff get to know each other in a mutually respectful and nurturing environment.

Pastoral Care at Mercedes College is centred on God, embracing the spirit of Catherine McAuley. Mercedes is, in essence, the face of Christ for its whole community and its pastoral role infuses every aspect of its operation and its relationships. Our Pastoral Care is concerned with maximising learning and growth, while developing the students' values, attitudes, knowledge, skills and practices. Our students are encouraged to develop a positive self-image reflecting self-awareness, courage and resilience, as well as caring for others, the community and the environment. Young Mercedes women have a love for life, belief in themselves and confidence in their abilities.

The life of every human person is seen to have a God given value and meaning which is enhanced in the Mercedes community where the atmosphere is permeated with the Gospel spirit of freedom and love.

At Mercedes, programmes, structures and specialist personnel ensure that specific needs are met in a systematic fashion.

PRINCIPLES

1. Foundational to the nature of pastoral care at Mercedes College is the belief that each person is created in the image and likeness of God (*Genesis 1:27*), with the inherent dignity that this implies, and all are created as social beings, with the mutual rights, obligations and needs that this implies
2. Pastoral care at Mercedes College affirms and gives expression to the belief that 'the person of each individual human being, in his or her material and spiritual needs, is at the heart of Christ's teaching: this is why the promotion of the human person is the ¹goal of pastoral care.'
3. Pastoral Care at Mercedes College shall promote tolerance, the acceptance of difference and a culture of cooperation, empathy and respect.
4. Parents are the first educators of their children and Mercedes assists parents in their Catholic education. Mercedes also recognises the special pastoral circumstances of its own community, including families, and utilises its resources, personnel and programmes to meet these needs.

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5. The function of Pastoral Care at Mercedes College is to:

Provide an environment, a set of policies and practices and a curriculum based on Gospel values.

Mercedes draws from approaches that understand a school to be an educational community committed to the students' holistic development. Enhanced student wellbeing contributes significantly to improved student learning outcomes. Effective pastoral care is therefore recognised as promoting the achievement of learning outcomes and thus contributing to a School Improvement Framework.

Enable students to attain the beliefs, values, attitudes, knowledge, skills and practices which will inspire them to achieve Christ's vision of the human person.

Mercedes College is concerned with students' development as women who are responsible, inner-directed individuals of virtue, capable of free choice and of making value-judgements enlightened by a formed conscience.

Ensure the care and development, nurturing and wellbeing of every member of the Mercedes family.

In the College, students see Christian values, in particular the Mercy Values that focus our thinking and actions. These values are lived rather than merely spoken of, and are experienced in sincere student/student, staff/student and staff/staff relationships.

6. Pastoral Care at Mercedes College is infused with the religious dimension, as are the elements of environment, policies and practices and curriculum.

It is through the dynamic and inter-related nature of these elements that the dignity of the human person is enhanced.

ENVIRONMENT

Student wellbeing is best achieved within a school environment that is safe, supportive, inclusive and empowering, where diversity is respected and valued, where human rights and the common good are honoured, where inter-relationships are positive, where students experience connectedness and engagement, and where those experiencing difficulty or special need receive particular care and support.

The aspects of the environment are as follows:

Life of Faith

- The Mercedes College mission and motto "Laudate Dominum" (Praise the Lord) is reflected in every part of school life.
- We celebrate and participate together in prayer, liturgy and sacraments, including Masses, Eucharist and Reconciliation.
- We reflect the values of the sacraments in our policies and practices by acceptance, forgiveness and nourishment of each other.
- We honour the traditions of the Church, of the Sisters of Mercy and of our Nation by celebrating such feasts as Easter, Mercy Day and Anzac Day.

Community Dimensions

Respectful and cooperative school-family relationships provide an effective channel of pastoral care for students. Schools and families share responsibility for developing and maintaining such relationships of trust, characterised by respect for the goodwill of the other and a willingness to engage collaboratively.

Specifically:

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- We place importance on positive and caring interpersonal relationships among staff and students.
- A strong focus on community exists through the Six Houses to which all students and staff belong.
- We encourage relationships with the Sisters of Mercy, the clergy, parent community and past students and the Perth City community.
- We respect and nurture the cultural diversity in the Mercedes Family.
- We recognise that there are those in our community who will experience alienation and we endeavour to support them.
- We promote leadership that empowers the Mercedes Family to contribute to the College and develop their talents to the full.

Policies and Practices

The Policies and Practices that Mercedes College employs to develop and enhance the dignity of the human person are constantly reviewed to ensure that they reflect the principles of Pastoral Care. The policies (and *Guidelines*) which are central to the Pastoral Care of our students are:

- Caring Behaviour Policy (Appendix A)
- Behaviour Management Policy (Appendix B)
- Suicide Prevention Policy (Appendix C)
- *Guidelines for dealing with Self-Harm (Appendix D)*
- Drug Policy (Appendix E)
- Health Policy (Appendix F)
- Security Policy (Appendix G)

Curriculum

Curriculum is the total school-directed experience of students. At Mercedes this caters for a variety of students' needs and abilities. The curriculum reflects the Principles of Catholic Social Justice teachings. It includes acquisition of concepts, the learning of facts, development of life skills, examination of attitudes and an exploration of student beliefs and values. All of these facets flow through to appropriate methods of assessing and reporting.

The Curriculum at Mercedes College aims to:

- Develop the whole person within a caring and supportive Christian Catholic environment.
- Witness to the values and teaching of the Gospel.
- Promote the achievement of excellence.
- Develop life skills to enable students to contribute and take their place as worthwhile members of our society.
- Prepare students to make informed and realistic decisions regarding their future vocations.

PROCESSES

1. At Mercedes College, a duty of care towards the students shall be exercised at all times during the school day. This duty of care extends to the provision of pastoral care of students that is exercised by **all** members of the school community.

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2. There shall be a fair and equitable distribution of the school's pastoral care responsibilities amongst all teachers.
3. Mercedes College will have a duty of care for no more than 15 minutes before the start of school each day and 15 minutes after classes each day. In addition, duty of care will be undertaken for those co-curricular activities organised by the College.
4. Pastoral care programs will provide opportunity for the empowerment of students in problem-solving and conflict resolution.
5. Every effort will be made to ensure early and appropriate involvement of parents when a student's well being is at risk.
6. The promotion of positive mental health will be a priority.

ROLES

HOMEROOM TEACHER

The Homeroom Teachers are the primary carers of students in their homeroom group on a day-to-day basis and, hence, will be the most important person in the school life of the student. As such the Homeroom Teacher is the initial and major point of contact for teachers and parents concerning the general welfare and good discipline of the individual student.

Each Homeroom teacher works as a member of the Year team to develop the pastoral care programme and assist with year-based activities, eg care of the Homeroom Group at the Assembly.

In this role the Head of Year, with Support from the Deputy Principal Student Life, responsible for the year group assist and support the Homeroom Teachers.

The Homeroom teacher is responsible for the development of the tone and morale in the class group. There are four areas of responsibility:

Theological:

- supporting the Catholic and Mercy ethos of the College
- fostering in the group a spirit of prayer, which includes leading the students in prayer at the beginning of each day.
- organising the Class Mass, supporting the RE teachers where possible in organising the Class Mass.

Educational:

- contact person between parents and classroom teachers
- liaising with subject teachers to assess overall progress of each student
- following up issues that have been highlighted as concerns by subject teachers
- monitoring academic standards
- reporting on and communicating general academic standards to parents as required
- constructing the pastoral feedback on a student's academic report
- follow up of attendance and attendance concerns.

Pastoral:

- following up on student absentees and lateness
- promoting self-esteem/respect for others through homeroom structures and organisation
- working with the Year Team in developing the PC programme for the year/class
- identifying at-risk students and working with the appropriate person in dealing with the specific difficulties

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- inculcating the spirit and understanding of the school rules
- encouraging participation in and support of school activities
- coordinating social activities pertaining to the Year level.
- Attending parent information evenings relevant to the Year level
- Encouraging and supporting students to take up leadership opportunities eg Student Representative Council/Environmental Steward/Co-curricular Activities/Peer mentors.

Managerial:

- conducting morning administrative period (Homeroom)
- conducting the Pastoral Care period according to agreed programme
- recording attendance and punctuality during morning homeroom
- ensuring there is appropriate follow-up with parents where necessary on matters related to attendance or punctuality
- Allocating lockers to students in the Homeroom at the commencement of the year and monitoring the usage and maintenance of the lockers during the year
- checking regularly each student's Mercedes College Student Diary and enforcing its usage
- communicating information to students through the Daily Bulletin
- promoting high standards of uniform and personal grooming
- accepting responsibility for the care, maintenance and security of the classroom and its surrounds
- developing strategies in association with the year team for the collection of forms, money for year based activities, etc
- developing strategies in association with the Year Team for monitoring and correcting professional standards associated with homeroom procedures in the year group.

HEAD OF YEAR

The Head of Year has a key role in working with the Year Team in the care of the students. While the Homeroom Teacher has the primary care role, the Head of Year assists and supports the Homeroom teacher in their role.

The Head of Year works with the Year Team to develop the pastoral care programme and year-based activities.

The Head of Year is a member of the Pastoral Council and, with other members of the Council, fosters the consistent application of College standards.

The Head of Year liaises with the Deputy Principal responsible for the year group. When requested, the Head of Year meets with the Principal to discuss issues pertinent to the staff and students in the year group.

The Head of Year liaises with the College Psychologists/Nurses/Student Services to discuss students of concern.

The Head of Year's responsibilities include:

Theological:

- actively living and promoting the College Mission
- encouraging and facilitating a mercy-inspired ethos in the College community.

Pastoral:

- in the case of a high needs student, liaising with the Inclusive Education Team to determine how best to meet the needs
- liaising with the school psychologists regarding pastoral matters where applicable, especially at the beginning of the year, where there are ongoing concerns with individual students

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- coordinating the development of effective pastoral care programmes with the respective Year Team, in cooperation with the College Psychologist and the Executive team member
- providing professional and personal support to the Homeroom Teacher in the pastoral care of their students. This includes identifying at risk students and working with the appropriate person in dealing with the specific difficulties.
- following up on behavioural issues of a more serious or recurring nature as a result of referral from the Homeroom or Subject Teacher
- Liaising with the relevant Deputy principal and/or Principal when it is deemed necessary for a student to be on Conditional Enrolment or to attend a Promotions Panel Meeting with parents
- providing support and advice to parents regarding the pastoral care of their daughter, including aspects of unacceptable behaviour and/or breach of College rules
- facilitating communication between staff and parents
- liaising with the Student Prefect Council to determine the Prefects' responsibilities with the homeroom groups

Educational:

- monitoring the academic standards in the year group
- disseminating career information as appropriate, in liaison with Career's Coordinator.

Managerial:

- Maintenance of records of contact with parents throughout the year that are then handed on to the Head of Year of the next year, in the event of a change, at the commencement of Term One
- organising and conducting formal year team meetings
- organising and conducting year assemblies
- coordinating, in collaboration with the College Psychologists, the placement of students in Homeroom groups and facilitating the orientation of new students
- coordinating the monitoring and maintaining of professional standards required in the Year group
- assisting the Year team to develop strategies for the collection of forms, for Year based activities, etc
- overseeing the distribution of lockers and locks and the monitoring of their proper usage
- assisting the Year team to develop strategies for monitoring and correcting professional standards associated with homeroom procedures in the year group
- organising social activities pertaining to the Year group, in consultation with Trinity College (Years 7-11)
- organising and facilitating parent nights relevant to the Year group
- assisting Executive with the selection of students for leadership roles or to represent the College
- organising letters to parents regarding social activities and information evenings
- liaising with the College Accountant regarding the amount and use of the Year group's pastoral care levy.
- Year 7 Coordinator: providing information to parents at the Parent Information Session held in the year prior to the students commencing their enrolment at the College
- Year 7 Coordinator: making contact with the primary schools of incoming students during Term 4 of Year 6
- Year 9 Coordinator: selection of Peer Mentors to be trained for Year 10
- Year 11 Coordinator: facilitation of Student Prefect Council election
- Rotation of Heads of Year

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APPENDIX A

CARING BEHAVIOUR POLICY

RATIONALE

Mercedes College is a Catholic school with a responsibility to provide an educational environment that promotes the dignity and respect of the person. Each of us at Mercedes is recognised as a unique individual bringing to the College special qualities and gifts to share. We all have a right to be respected and a responsibility to respect each other.

We aim to foster caring and positive relationships with others and therefore eliminate bullying. Educational outcomes, physical health and emotional well-being will be enhanced by a focus on caring for others at Mercedes College. Becoming a member of the Mercedes community brings rights and responsibilities. The College respects the rights of its students and staff to be free from all forms of negative behaviour including bullying.

All members of our community are expected to take responsibility to foster positive and caring behaviour. Such behaviour should be reported to ensure it does not persist or is not condoned.

DEFINITIONS

Mercedes College has a vision statement which challenges us to create a community in which students and staff seek to care for each other. As a Catholic college, we respond to the call of Jesus to love one another.

UNCARING BEHAVIOUR is any behaviour that is disrespectful to others.

BULLYING is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening.

Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (for example, through sharing of digital records) <https://bullyingnoway.gov.au>

PRINCIPLES

1. Caring behaviours at Mercedes College will be underpinned by the Mercy values of justice and compassion.
2. All members of the Mercedes College community are expected to promote positive and caring behaviour and value diversity.
3. At Mercedes College we accept responsibility to care for each other and in so doing eliminate bullying and harassment.
4. Mercedes College provides a supportive environment which:
 - encourages socially appropriate behaviour using positive behaviour management;
 - promotes respect for self and others
 - develops physical and emotional well-being and resiliency; and
 - develops interpersonal skills and positive mental health.
5. Dealing with bullying and harassment requires a whole-school community approach that is consistent with the Mercedes College Pastoral Care practices and the College's Evangelisation Plan.
6. Bullying and harassment will be dealt with. When bullying and harassment are ignored or overlooked, it serves to condone or reinforce the behaviour. Silence, when others are being hurt, is not acceptable.

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7. Bystander behaviour is crucial to the continuation or cessation of uncaring and bullying behaviour. Bystanders have the ability to reduce the severity of uncaring and bullying situations and help prevent further uncaring and bullying situations. The use of Stymie is promoted within the Mercedes community.
8. All parties to incidents of bullying and harassment are entitled to appropriate support.

PROCEDURES

1. All members of the Mercedes College community shall have access and exposure to Caring Behaviour Policy.
2. How uncaring behaviour can be challenged and how parents can help in assisting students to deal with uncaring behaviour will be published in the College Information Handbook.
3. The Caring Behaviour Policy, including specific reference to the Action Plan for promoting caring behaviour, is to be incorporated into the Pastoral Care programme at each year level.
4. All staff members have a role to play in ensuring that Mercedes College provides a caring and safe school environment.
5. Parents and students will be encouraged to see the Homeroom Teacher/s as the first contact regarding issues of uncaring behaviour.
6. All pastoral care staff – Homeroom teachers, Head of Years, Deputies, School Psychologists, Principal - shall be available for students and parents to discuss matters relating to the provision of a caring and safe school environment.
7. Topics related to a positive and caring school environment shall be highlighted in the curriculum.
8. Active supervision will be provided in the school grounds and for class/school activities to ensure the provision of a safe school environment.
9. Appropriate confidentiality will be ensured when matters of uncaring behaviour/bullying are reported.
10. Restorative justice practices will be utilised in the when dealing with uncaring behaviour.
11. Reports of repeat instances of uncaring behaviour/bullying and all relevant data collected will be recorded as a basis to evaluate and justify any approach taken in dealing with the behaviour and to inform prevention and management activities.
12. Where a student participates in repeated uncaring behaviour/bullying that is contrary to the mission statement of the College, suspension may occur.
13. Students will be made aware of the following action plan to promote caring behaviour.

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APPENDIX B

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT POLICY

RATIONALE

Mercedes College strives to create an inclusive Christian community where the message, practice and values of Jesus Christ, as proclaimed in the Gospels and lived through Mercy values, are given practical expression.

Behaviour management at Mercedes is treated in the total context of Pastoral Care. It is based on the fundamental concept that effective learning and development is best achieved in an environment where students are challenged to achieve their maximum potential.

PRINCIPLES

1. The Behaviour Management Policy at Mercedes is formulated to be positive and pastorally oriented. This not only preferred because of the philosophy of the school but also because it ensures more effective management.
2. Good behaviour management is best achieved when right relationships are fostered at all levels.
3. Good behaviour management requires attributes of staff and the administration of the school that include:
 - Commitment to the Student Code of Conduct and Staff Code of Conduct.
 - Good communication and regular contact with parents through the learning management system of SEQTA, email and phone calls.
 - Concern and respect
 - Consistency and transparency
 - Ability to listen with empathy and impartiality
4. The Deputy Principals will work alongside staff and will advise on action according to Catholic Education Western Australia policies and guidelines, and Mercy Education frameworks.
5. Where it is deemed essential for a student to be placed on contract due to continued inappropriate behaviour, the matter will be referred to the Principal.
6. The decision to exclude a student shall be the responsibility of the Principal.

DEFINITIONS

Child abuse:

Four forms of child abuse are covered by Western Australian law:

- (1) Physical abuse occurs when a child is severely and/or persistently hurt or injured by an adult or a child's caregiver.
- (2) Sexual abuse, in relation to a child, includes sexual behaviour in circumstances where:
 - (a) the child is the subject of bribery, coercion, a threat, exploitation or violence;
 - (b) the child has less power than another person involved in the behaviour; or
 - (c) there is a significant disparity in the developmental function or maturity of the child and another person involved in the behaviour.
- (3) Emotional abuse includes:
 - (a) psychological abuse; and
 - (b) being exposed to an act of family and domestic violence.
- (4) Neglect includes failure by a child's parents to provide, arrange or allow the provision of:
 - (a) adequate care for the child; or
 - (b) effective medical, therapeutic or remedial treatment for the child.

Corporal punishment:

Any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light; typically involving hitting the child with the hand or with an implement; can also include, for example, forcing the child to stay in an uncomfortable position. It does not include the use of reasonable physical restraint to protect the child or others from harm [from UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 8 (2006), paragraphs 11 and 15: CRC/C/GC/8, 2 March 2007].

Degrading punishment:

Any punishment which is incompatible with respect for human dignity, including corporal punishment and non-physical punishment which belittles, humiliates, denigrates, scapegoats, threatens, scares or ridicules the child [from UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 8 (2006), paragraphs 11 and 16: CRC/C/GC/8, 2 March 2007].

PROCEDURES

1. Organisationally, the management of discipline in Mercedes College is as follows:
 - Homeroom Teachers and Subject Teachers
 - Head of Year for the Year group, Head of Learning Area, relevant subject coordinator
 - Deputy Principal oversees select year groups and work with Head of Year and Head of Learning Area with regard to behaviour management
 - The Principal acts as the final arbiter of the behaviour management of the process if requested by the Deputy Principal
2. Subject Teachers and Homeroom Teachers are responsible for classroom behaviour management and good classroom control. Clear guidelines and expectations are to be set at the beginning of the year and reviewed throughout the year.
3. The Teacher is responsible for all students in his/her class. The Teacher is to ensure that he/she is present for each period and is responsible for seeing that each student participates actively in the education programme.
4. Issues or concerns specific to the Year group are to be referred to the relevant Head of Year.
5. The Head of Year will be responsible for ensuring that all interactions with students concerning behaviour management are documented through notebooks, SEQTA and any other required document templates.
6. Serious breaches of discipline are to be reported to the relevant Deputy Principal in charge of the year group.

Outcomes

- Withdrawal of privileges normally contingent upon good behaviour
- Recording the incident on SEQTA and communicating with parents
- Rearranging the environment to promote positive learning (for example, seating arrangements)
- Discussion with student regarding reasons for incident either in company with Head of Learning Area, Head of Year or Deputy Principal
- Renegotiating contract with student or class (e.g. standard of behaviour expected in class).
- Attendance at Wednesday detention

To consider

- All students receive positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour and are given opportunities to interact and develop respectful and positive relationships with each other and with staff members and volunteers.

- The use of any form of child abuse, corporal punishment or other degrading punishment is explicitly forbidden, and these terms are defined in accordance with these standards, in appropriate school publications and the Staff Code of Conduct.
- The administration of permitted forms of behaviour management, discipline or punishment conforms to the principles of procedural fairness and the prohibition of unlawful discrimination.
- In interactions with a student, the teacher should say nothing that would reflect unfavourably upon her parents, her home, her community, her race, her national origin, her intellectual capacity, sexual orientation, physical appearance or her previous or present teachers.
- Impolite and uncivil language should never be used when speaking to a student.
- Avoid sarcasm, ridicule, belittling or threatening language.
- Schoolwork, including 'lines' should not be used as a consequence except where it replaces work which was not done because of the issue.
- If students are sent out of the room, teachers should ensure that they are both supervised and constructively engaged.
- Unauthorised actions to correct behaviour may violate the Staff Code of Conduct.
- When unsure, a teacher must consult a Head of Year, Head of Department or Deputy Principal when contemplating a consequence of inappropriate behaviour.
- Each staff member is responsible for ensuring the Student Code of Conduct is followed in all respects and has the capacity to instruct students accordingly.

Detentions

- Students and parents shall be given at least one day's notice of an after-school detention session. A notification will be sent through SEQTA and parent email. This is then recorded on the Pastoral Care section of SEQTA.

Exclusions

7. Before any decision is made to exclude a student, the following procedures will be followed:
 - The parent or guardian of the student shall be informed that exclusion is a likely outcome based on the results of the investigation.
 - Should a parent or guardian agree to remove a student from the school, the Principal shall work collaboratively with the parent or guardian to help find an alternative school for the student.
 - Only after a parent or guardian has been given the option to remove a student from the school and has declined to do so, shall the Principal take a decision to exclude the student from the school.
8. The Principal shall ensure that detailed records of the events and discussions in relation to the decision to exclude the student from the school are maintained appropriately.
9. Records pertaining to the exclusion should be regarded as "Confidential" and be accessible only to employees specifically designated by the Principal.

APPENDIX C

SUICIDE PREVENTION POLICY

“Suicidal behaviour is the outcome of a complex range of personal, social and situational issues impacting on an individual. It is generally related to feelings of severe depression, to a sense of failure, hopelessness and helplessness that links with feeling alienated - feeling disconnected.”
(Ministerial Council for Suicide Prevention)

RATIONALE

Mercedes College acknowledges that some members of our community may be at risk of suicidal behaviour.

The College acknowledges the role and responsibility of parents/guardians as the student's primary caregivers.

Mercedes College aims to promote best practice towards the prevention, identification and support of members who may be at risk of suicidal behaviour.

Suicide prevention at Mercedes College occurs in the context of whole school approaches to developing student and community health and well-being. The World Health Organisation (2014) defines mental health as “a state of wellbeing in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.” Suicide Prevention should be understood with additional reference to the various policies and guidelines contained within the College's Pastoral Care Policy.

As children and young people spend a significant amount of time at school, teachers and support staff are in the position to observe and identify changes in behaviour and notice other signs that may indicate concerns for student mental health and wellbeing.

DEFINITIONS

Suicidal behaviour includes suicidal ideation, suicide attempts and suicide. Suicidal ideation refers to an individual's thoughts about ending their life while an attempt refers to an individual harming themselves with the intent to die but not resulting in death. In Australia, suicide is the leading cause of death for males and females aged 15-44 years (Suicide Prevention Australia, 2014). Of the people who think about suicide, a proportion will go on to attempt suicide; a much smaller number will take their own life.

Self-harming behaviour (sometimes referred to as non-suicidal self-injury) is considered to be a deliberate act to harm oneself without the intent to die and is aimed at reducing uncomfortable or distressing emotions. (See Guidelines for Managing Self-Harm for further information.)

Suicidal behaviour and self-harm differ in their intention, methods chosen, likelihood of fatality and frequency. Self-harm does not mean that a person is suicidal, however self-harm does place that person at higher risk of suicide. It is essential to understand the intent behind any behaviour, as one should not assume that the presentation of a minor injury does not involve suicidal intent.

WHOLE SCHOOL PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES

1. Pastoral care structures exist at the College that provide opportunities for student and staff interaction and communication.
2. Professional learning and training opportunities will be provided to staff on a rotational basis.
3. New staff induction will include provision of written information on suicide prevention issues. Opportunity will be given for new staff to review this material with appropriate staff.
4. All teaching where relevant should incorporate appropriate suicide prevention messages and content.
5. The College utilises research from the field of Positive Psychology to inform the selection/development of curriculum and pastoral/health initiatives to foster student wellbeing.
6. Health curriculum across Years 7-10 will address mental health and well-being issues.
7. Personal development and resiliency enhancement curriculum is included where possible.
8. Pastoral Care Teams are given timetabled opportunity to meet to discuss relevant issues.
9. Pastoral Council meets on a regular basis to develop and facilitate strategies to assist and support the College community in pastoral matters.
10. Pastoral Council members and Student Services personnel will complete appropriate Gatekeeper training in suicide prevention, or other equivalent training.
11. Students and staff have access to professional counselling and psychological services.

RESPONSE TO DIRECT OR INDIRECT DISCLOSURE OF SUICIDAL BEHAVIOUR

“Often the person is trying desperately to make sense of their situation or to change it in some way. They often feel isolated and unheard. By showing your concern and caring enough to become involved, you can help the person express their thoughts and feelings. You can make a difference. Help them to achieve their needs in other ways and to seek help. Do not keep the secret or assume that things ‘will be okay’.”

(Ministerial Council for Suicide Prevention)

All thoughts, threats or attempts of suicide, or other attempts at self-harm, must be taken seriously and referral to appropriate staff members made, so that a risk assessment by a trained professional can be carried out or arranged. This includes disclosures of suicidal behaviour made directly or indirectly by a person, and disclosures of suicidal behaviour reported by other persons. It also includes being witness to, hearing or being party to communication regarding suicidal behaviour. Suicidal ideation may also come by way of a curriculum task, such as a piece of writing or artwork with suicidal themes, so these should also be followed up appropriately.

All staff must act to protect and should never agree to keep suicidal behaviour a secret. Staff must not assume that things will be okay without further support. If a student discloses suicidal behaviour, it is important that the staff member is calm, caring and non-judgemental in their response. The staff member should listen and reassure the student that talking about their feelings is positive and helpful. It is not helpful and may be harmful to express emotional responses such as pity, anger and disgust, or by taking punitive action. It is critical that the student is linked to appropriate support and that safety is maintained at all times. Let the person know that you need to tell someone who has the skills to help them. Working with the person to seek that help can minimise the likelihood that they may feel angry, upset or betrayed and with time most report feeling grateful that someone cared.

When faced with suicidal behaviour staff may experience feelings of inadequacy, helplessness, frustration and disbelief. Remember that suicide can be prevented and that you are in a position to provide a great deal of support to that person. Remember also that you are not alone in your support of this person and consultation with other appropriate staff is crucial.

Procedure for staff aware of suicidal behaviour

1. Remain calm, do not panic or over-react. Take the situation seriously (even if they retract their statement) and aim to convey a sense of support and understanding. Secure an appropriate place to discuss concern. Listen carefully to the person, acknowledge their feelings and let them know that you will support them in finding the help they need.

Example: Teacher's response following a disclosure:

Summarise the information the student has disclosed.

"I appreciate it is difficult to let me know these thoughts and feelings. So what you're telling me is.... Have I got that right?"

Link the student to appropriate support.

"We need to support you and understand better what's going on. So I'm going to discuss this more with (appropriate staff member)."

Negotiate. It is required that concern is reported and followed up by an appropriate staff member.

"There are a few people we can go to... Who would you rather?" "How does that sound?"

1. If there is any concern about the student's immediate safety DO NOT allow them to be unsupervised. If you are unable to remain with the student, arrange for another staff member to do so while you seek support from a nominated staff member*, or accompany the student to the Wellness Centre. If you are teaching and require classroom support, email 'Pastoral Council' and 'Student Services' with an urgent subject line.
2. If relevant, discretely escort, or arrange for another staff member to escort, the student to the Wellness Centre for an assessment of any first aid needs.
3. Where there is a risk management plan (RMP) in place, follow actions as outlined.
4. Minimise any impact on other students by remaining calm, encouraging students to continue with their work and not allowing other students to become involved in the situation.
5. Immediately inform the relevant Head of Year or other available member of the Pastoral Council. Document what you have become aware of, how you have responded and forward this documentation to the Head of Year. The Head of Year will assess, consider contact with the student and parents/guardians, and make appropriate referrals to the College Psychologists and/or support agencies outside of the College. In all cases the College Psychologist will be informed.
6. Ensure that peers who may be impacted by the suicidal behaviour are identified and that the relevant Head of Year is notified.
7. If a staff member feels affected by what has occurred discuss this with your relevant Pastoral council member or contact Access, our Employee Assistance Program provider.

*The term 'nominated staff member' is used for the school-based staff member(s) who need to be informed. This will be the Head of Year in the first instance, and in that person's absence, an Executive support member or other appropriate member of the Pastoral Council. Nominated staff members should also have links with the College Psychologists, Nurses and other mental health professionals for consultation and referral where required. (Appendix II contains guidelines for nominated staff member/s)

MANAGEMENT PROCESS FOR STUDENTS AT RISK OF SUICIDAL BEHAVIOUR

Students identified as at risk of suicidal behaviour benefit from a cohesive and unified support network at the College.

- A case manager will be identified for each student at risk of suicidal behaviour. This person will be the College Psychologist, Head of Year or other. The case manager is a central point for receiving information and liaising with staff, parents/guardians and outside agencies. The case manager is involved with coordinating and implementing any school based strategies and monitoring and reviewing the progress of these strategies.
- All relevant information regarding a student at risk of suicidal behaviour should be directed towards the case manager. Given their unique knowledge position, the case manager

should be involved in all school based decisions regarding the student. If the case manager is a staff member other than the College Psychologist, the case manager will consult with the College Psychologist regarding the student.

- All relevant staff that have involvement with a student will be informed as soon as possible of circumstances that may be impacting on the student at school. This may be important from a safety perspective and in order to support and assist the student in coping with academic requirements, behaviour and social/peer group interactions.
- There are limits to what information is able to be provided to staff. Confidentiality is a significant consideration and student and parent/guardian involvement in this process is important.
- All information provided to staff is expected to be managed in an appropriate and confidential manner. Any written information should be stored in a locked drawer or cabinet. Electronic information should be stored on personal drives. Staff conversations regarding any students at risk of suicidal behaviour should be confined to appropriately private and confidential settings.

APPENDIX I: INDICATORS OF RISK

(Adapted from the Ministerial Council of Suicide Prevention)

It can be difficult to work out if a student is just having a rough time or whether their behaviour means that something more serious is going on. What we can recognise, however, are changes in behaviour and some of the common crises that may trigger suicidal behaviour.

Most people considering suicide give signs that they are not coping (Gatekeeper Training Manual, 2014). However, a number of young people may show no observable signs or behaviours. If staff have concerns regarding a student it is important to consult with appropriate school staff to ascertain if further actions need to be taken to support the individual. Listed below are some of the changes or behaviours that may indicate that a young person is stressed or distressed. Several indicators often occur together.

Sudden changes in their usual pattern of relating to others

- Withdrawing from family/friends;
- Not wanting to be left alone;
- Not wanting to be touched;
- Loss of interest in usual social activities;
- Developing violent, argumentative or disruptive behaviour;
- Problems with relationships, for example, exhibiting disruptive and unsuitable behaviour.

Significant personal changes

- Skipping classes and opting out of school activities generally;
- Marked decline in school performance and levels achieved;
- Apathy about dress, appearance and personal hygiene.

Changes that suggest depression or other mental health problems

- Loss of interest in previously pleasurable activities;
- Marked weight increase or decrease due to changes in eating habits;
- Lack of concentration;
- Changes in sleeping patterns (too much or too little);
- Delusions or hallucinations;
- Lack of energy or motivation.

Disinterest in the future or expressions of having no future

- Talk of being worthless, useless or hopeless;
- Sudden happiness after a lengthy period of depression;
- Unusually disruptive or rebellious behaviour;
- Death or suicide themes dominating written, artistic or creative work;
- Noticeable increase in compulsive behaviour;
- Unrealistic expectations held of self.

Impulsive and/or risk-taking behaviour

- Running away from home, truanting from school and an increase in sick days from work;
- Careless, accident-prone behaviour and taking personal risks, such as not looking after oneself when sick or playing 'chicken' on the road;
- Increased or heavy use of alcohol or other drugs.

Making final arrangements

- Making a will;
- Giving away valued possessions;
- Organising own funeral;
- Saying goodbye.

Self-harm and suicide attempts

- Self-mutilation, such as cigarette burns and cutting oneself;
- Having made previous suicide attempt(s) is one of the most important and reliable indicators of risk.

Verbal expressions - direct or indirect

- 'I wish I were dead';
- 'You won't have to bother with me any more';
- 'I think dead people must be happier than when they were alive';
- 'I'd like to go to sleep and never wake up'.

Thoughts and feelings often experienced

- Sense of hopelessness and/or helplessness, of having no control over one's life, persistently thinking things will never get better and that no-one can help;
- Feeling overwhelmed by the expectations of oneself;
- Loneliness, fear, feelings of abandonment and not being heard;
- Consistently high levels of anxiety and/or anger;
- Difficulty expressing emotions, for example difficulty expressing or accepting affection or having outbursts of uncontrolled anger;
- Preoccupied with thoughts of death or dying;
- Feelings of worthlessness, being a burden or feeling as though they have let parents or others down;
- Feelings of guilt and failure.

APPENDIX II: GUIDELINES FOR NOMINATED STAFF MEMBER(S)

Following a report of a direct or indirect disclosure:

Where there is an existing RMP in place, the nominated staff member follows actions as outlined.

The nominated staff member follows up with the disclosure as soon as possible – the same day as the disclosure where possible.

The nominated staff member gathers further information from the student and/or others as necessary. Any contact with the student is completed respectfully, discreetly and confidentially. The nominated staff member discusses with the student the limits to their confidentiality in a supportive manner and the likely actions to be taken (such as informing the parent/guardian).

The nominated staff member consults with appropriate staff to determine actions to be taken. This may include discussion with a colleague in Administration and/or Student Services as well as a professional who has specialist knowledge in the area of mental health (e.g. College Psychologist).

The nominated staff member contacts the parent/guardian about the concern after checking the system for family information such as court orders.

When contact with the parent/guardian occurs it is imperative the nominated staff member emphasises the importance of a supportive response to their child's disclosure.

If there is a staff member trained in suicide risk assessment and they are available (e.g. College Psychologist), the nominated staff member offers assessment for the student to the parent. Where there is a direct disclosure to a staff member trained in risk assessment, the staff member may contact the parent/guardian after the assessment has been completed.

Should a trained staff member not be available and the concern following consultation is deemed to require additional intervention, the nominated staff member recommends that the parent/guardian takes their child externally for assessment. Depending on the nature of disclosure this may include consultation with the Acute Response Team (ART), hospital emergency department, doctor or mental health service.

The nominated staff member recommends ongoing monitoring of the student and provides the parent/guardian with relevant emergency response numbers (see resource list below).

Should the parent/guardian not be contactable via telephone, the nominated staff member attempts to contact other family members or other emergency contacts on school system. If it is not possible to make contact with a suitable person then the nominated staff member consults with relevant staff before taking action. Depending on the nature of the disclosure, this may include contacting the Department for Child Protection and Family Support, consulting with the ART, conducting a home visit and/or contacting police. This may take time but it is important that it is followed through. The nominated staff member confirms that the school's documentation processes are followed.

Resource List:

Telephone 000 for emergencies

Acute Response Team:	1800 048 636
Mental Health Emergency Response Line:	1300 555 788
DCPFS:	9222 2555
Crisis Care (24 hours):	9223 1111
Kids Help Line:	1800 55 1800
Lifeline:	13 11 14

Under 16 years old, present to Princess Margaret Hospital emergency department, 24 hours
Over 16 years old, present to any local hospital emergency department, 24 hours

(For further guidelines and more specific information, please consult the *School Response and Planning Guidelines for Students with Suicidal Behaviour and Non-Suicidal Self-Injury*, which can be found in the Pastoral Care folder on the Staff Common.)

APPENDIX III: ADDRESSING SUICIDE ISSUES IN THE CURRICULUM

(Adapted from Mind Matters: Educating for Life)

Attention in class to the issue of suicide, while potentially interesting for many students, can be distressing for those with suicidal ideation and may make the option more viable for these vulnerable students. It should be noted that these students may not have told anyone about their distress.

Due to the suggestibility factor in relation to suicide teachers are advised not to undertake specific 'suicidal awareness' units. A suicide awareness unit can be described as a series of one or more lessons focusing on suicide. Teachers are also advised not to prescribe suicide as the central topic or sole focus for research projects, class debate, creative writing, poetry study, script writing or playmaking.

What if a teacher is considering teaching about suicide as part of curriculum?

- It is best to refer to suicide within the context of a broader curriculum of problem solving and emotional well-being, for example, in the context of discussing coping or help seeking, dealing with grief or teaching about mental illness.
- Teachers need to be aware that vulnerable students can respond badly to discussion of this issue. In the context of an ongoing class, reference to, or discussion of, suicide should be kept to a minimum.

Teachers should endeavor to:

- Promote positive attitudes, coping strategies and healthy options.
- Promote help seeking behavior. Inform students about types of support services available, and how to access these.
- Explain to students that suicide attempts often occur in association with depression, and that depression is treatable.
- Avoid increasing knowledge about methods of suicide and their lethality.
- Ensure that when using or exploring examples, they do not portray suicide as romantic, heroic, tragic, or inevitable. It should be emphasized that there are better options than suicide.
- Avoid alienating individuals or groups. Do not shame, blame or trivialise the painful realities of some people's lives.
- Acknowledge that some students can find this topic distressing, and invite students to speak with them (or another trusted adult) outside the regular class time if they are concerned about themselves or someone else, or feel the need to take the issue further for some reason.
- Notify Pastoral Council staff about any worrying statements or behaviours.
- Inform Pastoral Council staff if class discussion of suicide has been held.
- Identify and note students opting out of class.

What if the issue of suicide comes up in the context of another study (such as a novel or film study)?

- Question portrayals of suicide as romantic, tragic, or heroic. Expose the myth if the novel/film portrays the suicide in this way.
- Explore the positive attitudes, coping strategies or help seeking behavior that would have been available in the circumstances where a suicide had been described.
- Avoid stigmatizing or alienating individuals or groups. Do not shame, blame or trivialise the painful realities of some people's lives.
- Promote optimism, for example, things to live for or hope for in the future. Better options are always available. Most people recover or deal with depression and other mental illnesses once they get support and treatment.
- Avoid literature that provides information about suicide means and methods.
- Inform students about types of support services available should similar issues arise for individuals in the community. Provide information about how to access these.
- Conclude class with reminders about availability of support should students ever need to seek help.
- Inform Pastoral Council staff that a class will be or has been held, which focused on suicide.
- Notify Pastoral Council staff immediately about any worrying statements or behaviours of any students.

What if a student selects this as a focus of a research study?

- Recommend the student frames the research in such a way as to deal with suicide as one aspect of a study of related issues, such as youth, depression, mental health, resilience in young people or problem solving skills.
- Suggest parameters of the study, for example, factual or technical aspects (such as the rise in suicide rates), government policy, support programs, or suggestions about how to help a friend in distress.
- Follow-up on the student during their research phase to check for emotional impact.
- Read assignments carefully to check for coded calls for help.
- Pass on any concerns to a Pastoral Council staff member.
- Preview students work prior to presentation in front of the class.
- Screen performances by student prior to public presentation.
- Use discussion to challenge messages endorsing suicide as an inevitable or acceptable option.

- Engage in pre-reading on the issue, particularly suicide myths. Be prepared to challenge misinformation.
- Monitor any signs of distress in the presenter or other students. Follow up after class, and refer if necessary.
- Engage relevant local services in support of the student.

What if the topic of suicide arises spontaneously during class discussion?

- Clarify the area of interest and concern. Clarify how that has arisen. Is this an interest or concern of an individual, small group or the whole class?
- Do not become involved in providing opinion or advice in this area beyond your specific training and comfort level.
- Do assess whether the student(s) who raised the issue are upset or concerned about a particular student or situation.
- If the class wishes to pursue the issue but it does not appear that anyone is at immediate risk, agree to arrange a presenter who can plan a responsible approach to handling the students interest or concern.
- If students are presenting as upset or very concerned, stay engaged with the concerned student(s) but avoid getting involved with an immediate general discussion.
The following principles should then be applied:
- Ensure all concerned students are identified and included in any follow-up sessions.
- Do not handle it alone. Involve a College Psychologist, Head of Year, Principal or other school based or external person who is experienced in dealing with sensitive situations.
- Make it clear that confidentiality must always be broken if a life is in danger.

What if a visiting health presenter or theatre group offers a specific suicide awareness program for students?

- The College should reject programs that focus on suicide awareness for students.
- As far as possible, ensure that visiting performers or educators will not present materials that deal with suicide and, in particular, which highlight means or methods, or unduly focus on suicide as a solution or inevitable or glamorous option. Such a program may possibly raise more issues than it solves, and vulnerable students may become distressed.
- If this arises, ensure that follow-up sessions are provided by College staff, which include reference to supports available and help seeking options. Ensure that the same principles are adhered to as those used for the class teacher in their practice.
- Ensure that Pastoral Council staff are informed.

APPENDIX D

GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING SELF-HARM

What is Self-Harm?

Self-harm (SH) is a deliberate act to harm oneself and is aimed at reducing uncomfortable or distressing emotions. The behaviour is often repetitive in nature. Self-harm is sometimes referred to as non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI), because the intention of the person engaging in it is generally not to die. Common methods of SH include cutting, scratching and/or picking skin, burning, pulling hair, and hitting objects or oneself. Injuries from SH can vary from very mild to severe. SH is a significant issue with a collective lifetime prevalence of 17.2% for adolescents (Swannell, Martin, Page, Hasking and St John (2014)).

Why do People Self-Harm?

People SH for different reasons, but frequently it is reported that SH provides a release of overwhelming negative emotions that the person feels unable to cope with. Other reported motivations for SH include self-punishment, to re-establish a feeling of control, to cope better, to provide a temporary escape or as an expression of identity.

A common myth is that people who self-harm do it for attention. Although a small minority of people hope to communicate their needs in this way, most SH is done privately and scars are hidden. SH does NOT necessarily mean a person is suicidal, however without appropriate help this behaviour may escalate to more severe harm or suicidal behaviour.

What to do if you Observe Self-Harming at School

If you observe any form of self-injurious behaviour by a student, you should:

1. Remain calm; don't panic or overreact. Aim to respond in a neutral manner to avoid potentially reinforcing the behaviour. Do not leave the student unattended.
2. As long as it is safe to do so, remove any object that has been used to self-harm, being careful to avoid any bodily fluids coming into contact with yourself or others. If needed, organise for any bodily fluids to be safely cleared.
3. To minimise class disruption, encourage students to continue with their work rather than become involved in the situation.
4. Discretely escort, or arrange for another staff member to escort, the student to the Wellness Centre for their first aid needs to be attended to. Do not take the student to the College Psychologist's office.
5. If the student returns to class following assessment by the College Nurse, continue to respond in a neutral manner. Encourage her to continue with her work and discourage students from discussing the incident in class.
6. As soon as possible, document what you have seen and done, including the date and time. Forward this documentation as soon as possible to the relevant Head of Year, the College Nurses and the College Psychologists.
7. If you feel affected by what has occurred, discuss this with your relevant Pastoral Council member or contact Access – our Employee Assistance Program provider.

What to do if you Suspect that a Student is Self-Harming

If you are concerned that a student may be self-harming, or a concern is reported to you by another student:

1. As soon as possible, document the concern and/or observations, including the date and time. Give this documentation to the relevant Head of Year.
2. If a student discloses self-harm to you, do not promise that you will keep this to yourself, as you have a duty of care. You need to document the disclosure and give it to the relevant Head of Year.

APPENDIX E

DRUG POLICY

RATIONALE

Mercedes College aims to provide a healthy, safe and supportive environment that complements the classroom health learning experiences. The College believes that drug education is best taught in the context of the school health curriculum. Hence, this drug policy was developed to assist parents, students and staff to deal with the problems of drug abuse that confront every school in some way, at some stage.

All drugs have the potential to harm. For young people in particular, drugs can impact on their education, their relationships with family and friends and can also prevent them from reaching their full potential. Students need to be able to make safe, healthy and responsible decisions about drugs. Mercedes College plays a central role in helping our young women make such decisions by providing education about the risk and effects of drugs; by developing their confidence and skills to manage situations involving drugs; and by creating a safe and supportive learning environment. In all these areas, Mercedes College will act in partnership with parents/carers and any relevant agency concerned with drug education.

DEFINITIONS

A drug is defined as any substance (drugaware.com.au), with the exception of food or water, which when taken into the body, alters its function physically and/or psychologically.

This definition includes:

- All drugs: including stimulants eg amphetamines, depressants eg tranquillisers, hallucinogens eg marijuana, analgesics, alcohol, tobacco.
- Solvents (also called volatile substances) eg glue and petrol sniffing.

An intervention is seen as a positive action once the College community member has been identified as misusing drugs.

PRINCIPLES

1. Mercedes College will convey by its teaching and actions that it does not in any way condone any form of drug use that is prohibited by this policy.
2. At all times the welfare of students and staff will be protected by ensuring that incidents involving drug use are addressed rationally and in a manner that reflects the Vision Statement of the College.
3. In making decisions on the appropriate sanctions for students discovered infringing the Mercedes College drug policy, the needs of both the individual and the school community will be taken into account. Each instance will be considered individually and independently according to the set of circumstances existing at the time.
4. Mercedes College has a health education programme which will include drug education as an important part of the curriculum. It is supported by a healthy school environment.
5. Members of the College community will be subject to the laws and penalties regarding the sale and possession of drugs. All members have the same responsibility as all other citizens to uphold the law.
6. This Policy ensures confidentiality and access to counselling if necessary.

PROCEDURES

1. Mercedes College does not permit students, while on college premises or at a college function, to:
 - possess or use prohibited drugs in accordance with the Misuse of Drugs Act 1981

- possess drug-related equipment such as syringes, bongs, pipes, etc. (Misuse of Drugs Act 1981) except in cases of lawful medical use
- deliberately inhale solvents
- smoke tobacco products
- consume alcoholic beverages.

The phrase “on College premises or at a College function” includes any time a student is in uniform, and also includes travelling to and from school, or any school camp, retreat, excursion, or organised education social or sporting function.

2. If individuals supply, use, are found to be in possession of, or are under the influence of illicit drugs, the Principal or Executive Support will notify the parents and suspension will be immediate. The Principal, or Executive Support, will notify the police. Cautioning or charging of the individual will be at police discretion.
3. In any of the situations listed under 2, appropriate counselling will be made available to the students and parents/guardian by a School Psychologist. Intensive drug counselling is not the role of College personnel and outside counselling agencies may be contacted.
4. Individuals found using on the College premises will have any substances confiscated, and these will be handed over to the police.
5. Students on prescribed medication are encouraged, where possible, to take their medication at home. If drugs need to be taken during the school day, information on the drugs needs to be provided in writing to the College Nurse.
6. Parents will need to sign an authorisation for the College to administer analgesics to students.
7. Prescription drugs should only be taken by the person for whom they were prescribed. If an individual is found to have abused medication parents will be informed immediately and the student suspended from school. The student will only return to the College following an interview of the parent/guardian and the student with the Principal. Arrangements will be made for the student to participate in counselling. In the case of a repeat offence, exclusion is possible.
8. Students smoking or in possession of cigarettes (first offence) will be suspended from classes and work under supervision for one day. Parents/guardians will be informed. In the case of a second offence, parents and the student will be required to discuss the situation with the Principal. A longer suspension may be enforced.
9. Where alcohol has been consumed on College premises or at a College function (unlawful under the Liquor Licensing Act 1988) parents and the individual concerned will be required to discuss the situation with the Principal and suspension is a possibility. Where deemed necessary, arrangements will be made for the student to participate in counselling.
10. Students are personally required to catch up on any school work missed due to sanctions which have been imposed by the College.
11. Relevant information will be documented and filed by any member of the Executive and/or Pastoral Council.
12. Confidentiality will be respected; however, it may be necessary to notify particular staff members

HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

Rationale

Mercedes College aims to provide a healthy, safe and supportive environment that maintains and compliments the learning experience in the curriculum and acknowledges the dignity, culture, values, spiritual beliefs and rights of individuals within the school community.

Mercedes College endeavours to promote wellbeing within the college so that students will value themselves as well as those around them, build positive emotions and relationships, develop personal resilience, choose healthy lifestyles and flourish as young women.

The College values of compassion, excellence, justice, integrity and service underpin the Mercedes College Health and Wellbeing Policy, with particular focus on integrating the principles of Positive Education. Staff of the college Wellness Centre coordinate the implementation of the policy throughout the school.

Domains

1. Professional Practice and Obligations

This relates to the professional, legal and ethical responsibilities of Mercedes College and the Wellness Centre team. It includes accountability for practice, functioning in accordance with legislation, mandatory reporting, and protection of the students/staff/families rights.

2. Provision and Coordination of Care

This domain is in relation to the coordination, organisation and provision of health care by school staff and college nurses that includes the assessment of individuals/groups, planning, implementation and evaluation.

3. Collaborative and Therapeutic Practice

This domain relates to establishing, sustaining and concluding professional relationships with individuals/groups. It focuses on the roles of the Wellness Centre team, interdisciplinary health management, collaboration with healthcare professionals and community service providers, and the active engagement with students to reach positive student health outcomes.

Principles: Professional Practice and Obligations

1. Mercedes College will employ a College Nurse, registered with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency to provide high quality, evidence-based health care to the students, staff and wider school community.
2. The College Nurse will work within their scope of practice and in accordance to current legislation governing nursing practice. The College Nurse will uphold the *Competency Standards* established by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA), adhering to the *NMBA Code of Conduct for Registered Nurses* and also the *Mercy Education Code of Conduct*. The College Nurse is aware of the legal implications of nursing interventions and identifies and appropriately responds to unprofessional practice relating to confidentiality and privacy legislation.
3. The College Nurses, College Psychologists and wider staff community have a duty of care to all students in relation to their physical, social and psychological health. Mercedes College recognises the responsibility to prevent harm and are obligated to raise concern and perform interventions when necessary.
4. Under the *Children and Community Services Act 2004*, the Mercedes College Nurses and Teachers are required by law to report concerns of child sexual abuse to the Department of Child Protection. The College also supports mandatory reporting of other forms of child abuse ie. physical, emotional and neglect.
5. Mercedes College staff recognise and respond to unsafe/unprofessional practice in relation to student health care. Incident reporting is compulsory and will be followed up accordingly to prevent recurrence.
6. The Wellness Centre team will actively integrate Mercedes College organisational policies and guidelines with professional standards.

7. Establishes and maintains documentation according to organisational guidelines, procedures and legal requirements, ensuring records are stored in a secure location/format.
8. Identifies and adheres to legislation regarding consent, confidentiality, privacy and release of information.
9. Advocates for and protects the rights of children and young people and participates in the promotion of health and welfare for its students.
10. Promotes the safe and healthy use of communication technology and the prevention of misuse for example social/cyber bullying.

Principles: Provision and Coordination of Care

1. Mercedes College will effectively address the healthcare needs of students, staff and groups using a school community approach. This will include systematic and accurate health assessment of physical, emotional, mental, cultural, spiritual, social, sexual health and wellbeing that are specific to age, adolescent health, growth and development.
2. Comprehensive health history and medical management care plans will be collected in partnership with families so that safe and effective evidence based interventions will achieve expected outcomes. Care will be provided according to the documented and agreed health plans with consistency and continuity.
3. Crisis intervention and critical incidents will be managed effectively using the available resources and within the scope of practice. Professional calm demeanour while under stressful situations is encouraged.
1. Uses an integrated evidence-based approach to health promotion and engages the whole college community to develop partnerships and share knowledge of relevant and current health education both in the formal curriculum and informally with individuals and groups.
2. Identify, prioritise and document health needs and resources within the college community taking account those with special needs.
3. Maintains staff knowledge and skills in management of emergency and crisis response for example CPR, anaphylaxis, first aid, mental health risk and critical incidents.
4. Educates students to promote independence and control over their health, nutrition, hydration, exercise, sun protection and hygiene.
5. Ensures a healthy work and learning environment that is respectful, safe and supportive of students and the college community
6. Acts to support students and the college community in stressful/crisis situations by providing an appropriate environment for distressed individuals and assisting students to reach acceptance in terms of distress or loss.
7. Acknowledges and understands diverse family units and parenting practices and how they influence health and wellbeing.
8. Facilitates a physical, psychosocial, cultural and spiritual environment that promotes positive lifestyle, happiness, safety and security.
9. Maintains and promotes standards of universal infection control, aiming to reduce emerging epidemics/pandemics in the College community. Supporting and facilitating immunisation programs.

Principles: Collaborative and Therapeutic Practice

1. Mercedes College enables students, families and the college community to participate in their own health care and facilitates informed decisions through the provision of information, resources and support. The college respects these decisions within an ethical framework.
2. Maintains effective and collaborative working relationships with members of the wellbeing team including Nurses, Psychologists, Pastoral Care Deputy, Heads of Learning areas.
3. Consults with relevant health care professionals, service providers, school staff and families to facilitate continuity of care.
4. Maintains confidentiality in discussions with wellbeing team members about an individuals/groups needs and progress.
5. Provides links to statutory and voluntary organisations, child protection and parenting education programs.

APPENDIX G

SECURITY POLICY

Protection of Students' Property

Principles

1. Mercedes College is a safe and secure environment.
2. All Students have the right to have their property respected by others.
3. The College's Caring Behaviour Policy protects all members against uncaring behaviour.

Procedures and Practices

- **Respect for other people's property and acknowledgement that stealing is an immoral practice are explicit outcomes of the College Curriculum.**
- It is normal practice to secure all College facilities and resources. College property should be identified and kept in a safe environment.
- College Keys are provided to staff members for individual use. It is the responsibility of each member to keep them secure and safe. **On no account should keys be given to students.**
- All students are allocated a locker in which to secure their personal belongings, including school related materials. A standard combination lock will be purchased at the College by each student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure the locker is secured at all times.
- No student has the right to access another student's locker without the permission of the owner or authorised teacher.
- Students are expected to be under teacher supervision during scheduled class times.
 1. Students should not be allowed to visit their lockers during class periods.
 2. Toilet visits should be limited and must be recorded in the student's diary.
 3. Students should not be released from class before the scheduled finish time.
 4. Student requests to use facilities (e.g. computers, sewing machines) in another classroom will be granted only if **prior** permission is given by a supervising teacher.
 5. Students who attend other commitments during classes (e.g. music/speech lessons, appointments) require prior authorisation.
- Students' personal belongings must be clearly identified. This includes articles of clothing, texts, stationery and other school materials. Calculators should be engraved.
- Students are requested not to bring unnecessary, personal, valuable items or large amounts of money to school.
- Items of value should be kept in a secured locker.
- Items of value should not be left in an unsupervised school bag.
- Items that may pose a danger or be perceived as a danger to their peers are forbidden at the College.

Lost or stolen student property

Principles

1. The Caring Behaviour Policy of the College supports students who have been victims of uncaring, selfish behaviour.

Stealing is an immoral and unlawful practice and will not be tolerated at Mercedes College.

Mobile Phones:

The College recognises that many students have mobile phones, often provided by parents for security reasons. These may be brought to the College provided students abide by the conditions of use outlined by the College.

Procedures for Students.

- Students must make every endeavour to establish whether missing property is merely misplaced or stolen.
- Lost property might be located in the Lost Property Box in the Administration area. Students may seek teachers' permission to search for missing property (e.g. a missing school bag) which may have been inadvertently taken and placed in another location.
- Students must report stolen property as soon as possible to a teacher, Head of Year or to Student Services. A written report including a description of the missing property should be forwarded to the Head of Year

APPENDIX H

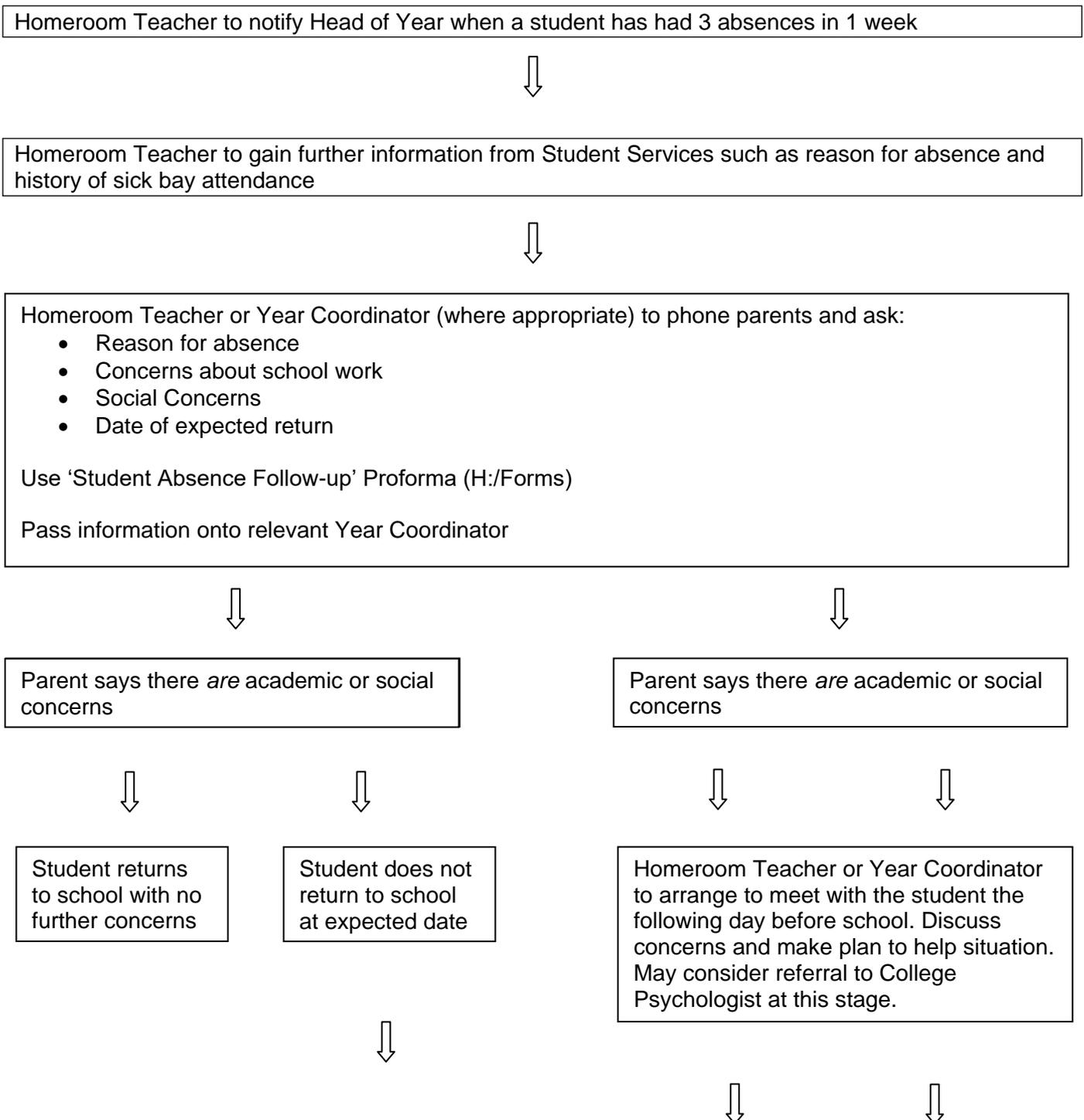
PREVENTION OF SCHOOL REFUSAL GUIDELINES

Rationale

School refusal has detrimental effects on student wellbeing and academic success. It is also an issue that requires intensive involvement by Pastoral Council members. Hence prevention is extremely important.

It should be noted that the quicker school refusal is dealt with, the less chance of the situation becoming chronic. Being vigilant and proactive in the early stages of *all* cases will result in the prevention of those *few* cases that would otherwise end up being severe.

Processes





Homeroom Teacher or Year Coordinator to contact parents and clarify situation



Student returns to school with no further concerns

Student does not return to school at expected date



Student returns to school and situation addressed

Student does not return to school or returns but absences continue



Student, Parents, Year Coordinator and/or Homeroom Teacher, College Psychologist, (and Learning Support Staff if appropriate) to meet and discuss attendance plan.



If absences continue, refer to Deputy Principal. Deputy Principal to refer to Participation Team if appropriate.