



Al-Faisal College Student Welfare Policy

INTRODUCTION

Like any other school, Al-Faisal College needs to have an effective and appropriate Student Welfare Policy and practices, so that all students and staff can work together in a safe, harmonious and educationally productive environment.

As an Islamic school, Al-Faisal College has certain advantages in implementing such a Student Welfare Policy, given that:

- we are a culturally and religiously unified college;
- virtually all students come from an Islamic background;
- as a faith and belief system, Islam embodies a range of values which are highly relevant in forming the basis of a Student Welfare Policy and practices;
- a belief in Islamic values is the fundamental reason for parents choosing to send their children to Al-Faisal College.

As a registered and accredited school, Al-Faisal College must meet all relevant government requirements, specifically including those of the NSW Board of Studies, and is committed to striving for academic excellence in a safe and mutually respectful atmosphere, where each individual is encouraged to reach his/her potential. **The use of corporal punishment, in any form, is prohibited and has no place in the welfare and disciplinary policy and practices at this school.**

Additionally the school does not explicitly or implicitly sanction the administering of corporal punishment by non-school persons, including parents/guardians to enforce discipline at the school.

Additionally, Al-Faisal College does not sanction or support the use of corporal punishment by parents or others for misbehaviour that has occurred at school or during school-based activities.

The College is pleased to discuss with parents the type of measures it considers appropriate to reinforce the good behaviour of students while in the care of the College.

AIMS

Through the implementation of an effective Student Welfare Policy, we aim to help students develop:

- a coherent set of values to guide behaviour, now and in the future;
- personal and social responsibility for their actions and their consequences;
- a sense of satisfaction from learning;
- a sense of personal dignity and worth;
- a sense of cultural, national and international identity;
- an ability to communicate effectively;
- a caring attitude towards others
- an ability and confidence to form satisfying and stable relationships;
- a respect for others' opinions and views

The college, together with parents and children, can realise these aims, by developing, implementing, assessing and evaluating:

- quality teaching and learning programs in all curriculum areas;
- general measures to encourage and promote the educational and social development of all students;
- preventative measures to ensure the safety and well-being of all students and school personnel;
- remedial measures to deal with specific students' difficulties and behaviours;
- sanctions to deal with serious breaches of the policy.

DEFINITIONS

1. Student welfare encompasses pastoral care, behaviour, discipline, dress, speech, and demeanour, adherence to school rules, treatment of and by others, safety considerations, entitlements, expectations, rights and responsibilities.
2. Policy encompasses documentation, practices and procedures, both general and specific, relating to any and all aspects of student welfare in the school.
3. Values are ideas, beliefs, standards or concepts considered as important in life as worth having, worth doing, or worth aspiring to.

Values may stem from aesthetics, (what is considered beautiful or enjoyable) or from ethics (what is considered morally right or wrong, or good or bad).

Religious values (e.g. Islamic values) often incorporate both aesthetic and ethical perspectives.

PARAMETERS

Student welfare in a college operates and applies at many levels, micro and macro, formal and informal, minor and major.

Examples could range from a teacher telling a child not to lean back in a chair, because it's dangerous, through to the Principal expelling a student because of a serious assault on another student or teacher.

No Student Welfare policy could expressly refer to every single example of conduct or behaviour which might be deemed unacceptable in a given set of circumstances. Teachers' judgement and professionalism have to be allowed for.

Nevertheless, teachers and/or students may be called on to explain and justify why they acted in a particular way in a given set of circumstances, which may or may not be explicitly covered by the Student Welfare Policy.

PRINCIPLES

The ultimate goal of an effective Student Welfare Policy is the inculcation of self-discipline and responsible behaviour.

Al-Faisal College is committed to this goal, by:

- having a clearly articulated framework for behaviour, realistic goals and high expectations for all students;
- helping students understand and experience what is appropriate behaviour, by providing positive role models;
- actively teaching and modelling the behaviour we expect;
- displaying, sharing and rewarding good or improved behaviour;
- raising self-esteem by recognising achievement in various aspects of students' lives;
- encouraging students to take ownership of their behaviour, as responsible members of school and wider society;
- working in partnership with parents and carers.

Experience and ‘best practice’ show that children learn best in a safe, caring and supportive environment, in which positive values are taught and responsible behaviour encouraged.

Experience also indicates, however, that some children ‘act out’ in such an environment, test the boundaries of unacceptable behaviour, and exhibit, for a variety of reasons, attitudes and behaviour that are anti-social, immature, unsafe or which interfere with the rights of others.

A Student Welfare Policy, even when based on positive, Islamic values, still needs to take account of the potential for unacceptable behaviour and attitudes, and needs to include appropriate behaviour modification strategies, disciplinary measures and sanctions, including the ultimate ones of suspension and expulsion, to cover all potential situations.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Rights of Students

- to know what is expected of them in and by the school
- to receive a quality education
- to be able to learn without threat or fear
- to be treated fairly and with respect
- have a right to be heard

Responsibilities of Students

- to seek guidance when needed
- to follow directions and advice from staff
- to listen to others’ opinions and views
- to treat others fairly and with respect
- to make genuine efforts to learn, and to experience success

Rights of Staff

- to be able to teach, unhindered, and to share their knowledge
- to be treated with respect by students, colleagues and parents
- to be supported by the school executive

Responsibilities of Staff

- to embody high standards of professionalism and scholarship
- to create and maintain a safe and caring learning environment
- to treat colleagues, students and parents with respect
- to support the school executive

Rights of Parents

- to have their children educated to accountable standards, in accord with their abilities
- to know their children are safe and cared for at school
- to be treated with due respect
- to have reasonable access to staff
- have a right to be heard

Responsibilities of Parents

- to guide and assist their children to meet school obligations
- to get their children to school on time and make approved arrangements for their return home after school
- to pay all relevant school fees and costs
- to provide the school with accurate and up-to-date information about their children
- to keep their children away from school when sick or injured
- to treat other parents, staff and students with respect

RECOGNITION AND REINFORCEMENT OF POSITIVE, RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOUR

Positive, responsible behaviour, earnest and genuine effort and worthwhile achievements must be actively promoted by all members of staff.

Such an approach:

- clarifies and reinforces the behaviour and standards the school expects;
- focuses attention on those who are behaving and working appropriately, rather than on those who are not;
- encourages students' confidence and self-esteem;
- encourages a happy and productive teaching and learning environment.

DEALING WITH IRRESPONSIBLE OR UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

The College's Student Welfare Policy acknowledges that:

- not all students will always act in responsible and appropriate ways;
- all students must accept responsibility for their own actions;
- staff, supported by parents, have an obligation to guide students into acceptable patterns of behaviour;

- inappropriate behaviour leads to certain consequences, and these consequences should be:
 - articulated and known in advance;
 - presented as a consequence of a choice the student has made to behave in a particular way;
 - applied equitably and consistently;
 - in proportion to the level and nature of the misbehaviour.

When action is taken in regard to irresponsible or unacceptable behaviour, it should be aimed at:

- reinforcing and encouraging more appropriate choices and behaviour in future;
- discouraging further inappropriate behaviour by the student(s) concerned;
- ensuring, as appropriate, the welfare and safety of all students and staff;
- ensuring, as appropriate, a continued focus on quality teaching and learning.

Unless, after due consideration, the action taken extends to the ultimate sanction of expulsion from the College, the student should be allowed the opportunity of ‘a fresh start.’

It should be made clear to students and their parents, however, that behaviour records are kept within the college, and students are accountable for their actions not only in individual incidents, but for their pattern of behaviour over time.

Irresponsible and unacceptable behaviour must be recorded by staff in the student diary.

MERITORIOUS AND COMMENDABLE BEHAVIOUR

Behaviour that is meritorious and commendable is likely to be characterised by values such as:

- honesty
- respect
- tolerance
- modesty
- courtesy
- sincerity
- trust
- generosity of spirit

- politeness in manner and speech
- cleanliness and neatness
- industriousness
- hospitality and sharing
- effort and achievement

The ideal, of course, is for such values and behaviour to become the norm within (and beyond) our school. Children and human nature being what they are, however, they will need to be encouraged, acknowledged and, when appropriate, overtly rewarded.

Through their daily, close personal contact with children, teachers will observe many examples of behaviour and attitude which reflect positive and desirable values, such as those above. Some will be appropriately acknowledged and encouraged by a simple ‘Thank you’, or individual or group praise from the teacher. Some may warrant a symbolic token of recognition (e.g. a certificate or ‘stamp’, a commendation to the Co-ordinator, Deputy Principal or Principal, or public recognition at a school assembly etc).

Children, even young children, have a keen sense of ‘justice’, of fairness and of consistency. Any system of rewards must keep this in mind. Often, personal and genuine praise or appreciation from a respected adult is the only reward they seek.

Of course, to encourage group pride and responsibility, a whole class may be ‘rewarded’ for excellent behaviour, cleanliness, kindness, good efforts etc, by special privileges, (a video, an excursion etc).

A brief note or phone-call to a parent to let them know of a particular achievement or commendable behaviour by their child can be time well spent.

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

Behaviour that is unacceptable includes:

- verbal, psychological or physical bullying in any form
- racist, bigoted, intolerant or hurtful remarks or actions
- deliberately hurting or endangering others
- deliberately damaging or interfering with the property of others
- theft, dishonesty, including cheating and lying
- interference with the rights of others, to teach or learn

- violent, insolent or threatening behaviour
- being in possession of a weapon
- being in possession of cigarettes, alcohol, or any illegal substance
- being in possession of a mobile phone (phones are to be left in the front office at the beginning of the day and collected at the end of the day)
- continued lateness (3 or more times)

The ideal, of course, would be for such behaviour or attitudes never to manifest themselves within the school (or elsewhere).

Some manifestations of unsatisfactory behaviour, and some focus questions or strategies to address them are:

Excessive talking in class time

Why are students talking? Are they in fact talking about the work? Are they bored? Are they confused?

- Praise those who are quiet or on task
- Avoid shouting across class... students will simply shout back
- Make sure teachers' instructions are clear and unambiguous

Not paying attention

- See above
- Isolate key 'trouble makers'
- Use responsible students as buddies
- Revise key points for clarification

Work not finished

Why? Too easy? Too difficult? Too boring?

- If work should be completed, perhaps finish at recess/lunch or set as homework with note to parent to 'sign off'

Arguing/fighting

- Important that teacher act as calming influence
- Discuss the incident and get both (or all) points of view
- Arrange appropriate apology
- Decide if further action (e.g. referral to Deputy Principal or Principal) is necessary

Children and human nature being what they are, however, it is wishful thinking to expect that all children will always behave in appropriate ways.

In the context of this policy, and in particular the section **Dealing with Irresponsible or Unacceptable Behaviour**, action taken may include:

- Verbal reprimand: Ideally given by the teacher actually observing the (minor) misdemeanour, and at the time of its happening or as soon as possible thereafter.
Reprimands should be clear, calmly given, explicit and unambiguous. They should focus on the behaviour and the reasons for its unacceptability.
- Impositions: Some actions, in some circumstances, may warrant the writing out of an explanation, or apology, or the undertaking of an exercise, to exemplify desirable behaviour
Teachers should avoid long, complex or meaningless impositions, as they can be counterproductive.
Remember, also, that when a piece of learning is converted into an imposition, it is hardly conducive to a love of learning.
If an imposition is given and undertaken, its satisfactory completion should be acknowledged. If done at home, it may be appropriate to have a parent 'sign off'.
This may reinforce in both students' and parents' eyes the fact of the misdemeanour and the fact that it was taken seriously. It may also encourage the parent to play a role in supporting the school.

DETENTION

Individual students, or, when judged appropriate, groups or classes, may be detained under certain circumstances:

- The student(s) must be directly supervised by the teacher concerned, or by another teacher, by arrangement
- Detentions at morning recess (high school) / first half lunch (primary school) must not exceed 10 minutes
- Detentions must not be held during prayer time
- Students genuinely needing to go to the toilet must be permitted to do so
- There may be circumstances in which a whole class is detained because of the misdemeanours of one, or a few students, usually because they have not 'owned up'.

While group punishment can be effective, if it is used to remind the class of shared or common responsibility, it can also be misinterpreted as laziness or unfairness on the part of the teacher. ("He/she can't be bothered finding out who was really responsible, so everyone gets the blame.")

When students perceive that they have been unfairly punished, they may also seek out the actual culprits and try to mete out their own punishment, which may well fall outside school policy.

AFTER SCHOOL DETENTION

After school detentions are held for an hour after school, from 3:35pm to 4:35pm. Primary detentions are held on Tuesday afternoons, and High School detentions are held on Wednesday afternoons.

Detentions may be issued by teaching staff with the approval of co-ordinators and the Deputy Principal. Copies of after-school detentions must be kept by teachers/co-ordinators. After school detention forms are issued to students. These forms must be signed by parents and returned to school as soon as possible. Students cannot attend after school detention without parent consent. Failure to attend after school detention may result in suspension from school.

WITHDRAWAL OF PRIVILEGES

The ideal, of course, is for students to regard attending the College, and participating in all school activities, as a privilege.

For the purposes of encouraging appropriate behaviour, however, certain school activities may be regarded and promoted as ‘privileges’, and irresponsible, inappropriate or unsafe behaviour may be used as a basis for not permitting particular students to participate.

In principle, such activities could include excursions, school performances, special functions, visits outside the school etc.

Before using such a strategy, however, teachers should take account of the following:

- Most school activities form part of the learning curriculum. They simply extend the teaching-learning situation beyond the classroom. They involve, and should involve, structured learning opportunities. Not allowing a certain student to participate in such an activity can be seen as depriving that student of an opportunity to learn.... an opportunity being granted to other class members.

- Safety considerations and/or a proven record of unreliability or untrustworthiness should be significant factors in determining whether a particular student is permitted to attend.
- The relevant co-ordinator and, if judged necessary, the Deputy Principal or Principal, should be advised in advance and the parents informed, in writing, of the decision and contributing reasons.

TIME OUT

There are circumstances in which merely removing a student from the immediate environment in which unacceptable behaviour is occurring is enough to calm the student and situation down. (An example could be a sudden outburst of impulsive or inappropriate behaviour, often out of character.)

Until such time as the school has a designated 'Time Out' room and timetabled supervision, the following guidelines apply:

- Students must not be 'sent out' unsupervised, especially in an emotional or volatile situation. The assistance of a nearby colleague must be sought, or if possible that of a senior member of staff or the Principal.
- If judged appropriate, a sensible class member may be sent to enlist such assistance.
- In all such situations, a judgement must be made which balances the welfare and safety of the class group, against the nature of the misbehaviour and the welfare and safety of the offending student.

RESTITUTION

When the behaviour of a student has led to damage to or loss of property belonging to the school or to school members, the offending student may be asked to replace, repair or compensate for the loss or damage.

Such a strategy must take account of the circumstances, the nature of the loss or damage and the age of the student(s) concerned.

The Principal must approve the enforcement of financial restitution, and the parent must be formally advised.

MEETING WITH PARENTS

It may form part of a welfare/behaviour modification strategy to meet with the parent(s) of a particular student. Such a meeting can:

- reinforce the seriousness with which the teacher views the behaviour
- add the parents' support to help bring about improvement
- clarify reasons for the behaviour, which may not previously have been understood
- give formal warning of more serious consequences if the behaviour does not improve

The appropriate co-ordinator must be notified of the intention to have such a meeting. It is advisable that the co-ordinator and/or Deputy Principal attend.

A judgement needs to be made as to whether the student attends the meeting. In some instances, it may not be appropriate.

SUSPENSION

Suspension from school is the penultimate sanction which can be imposed.

A student under suspension forfeits all entitlements in regard to attendance at the College, participation in College activities or programs, or even being on College premises, for a specifically delineated period of time.

Suspension may be imposed only by the Principal. It will normally follow consultation with the teacher(s), student and parents.

Suspension may range from one day to longer periods (e.g. 20 days), depending on circumstances and the seriousness of the offence.

Suspension may be imposed immediately in such circumstances as:

- possession of a weapon at school
- possession of cigarettes, alcohol, drugs or any illegal substance at school
- intentionally causing or threatening to cause serious injury or harm to any school member
- persistent or willful disobedience, insolence, verbal harassment or abuse

All incidents leading to suspension are to be documented, investigated and carefully considered.

EXPULSION

Expulsion is the ultimate sanction. Once expelled, a student is no longer a member of the College community and cannot be re-enrolled at any future date.

If the student is less than 15 years of age, the law requires him/her to be at school and the parents will have to seek admission to another school.

Expulsion may be seen as the extreme endpoint, normally following suspension(s) for very serious misbehaviour over time.

Once this stage is reached, the College authorities have determined that the student has forfeited all entitlements to membership of the school. The safety and welfare of the overall school community will be paramount considerations.

APPEALS

Both suspension and expulsion are determined only after detailed consideration of the misbehaviour or unacceptable actions involved. The reasons will be clearly articulated to the student and parents/guardians.

An opportunity will be provided for the presentation, in person and/or in writing, of an appeal against the decision to suspend or expel.

The appeal should be heard within one week of the decision to suspend or expel, and should present any extenuating or explanatory circumstances which the parents/guardians would wish to be taken into account.

The appeal will generally be dealt with by the Principal, Deputy Principal and a representative or delegate of the School Board.