
Student Discipline and Behaviour Policy

Date: July 2023

Next Review: July 2026

1. Preamble

- 1.1. Swan Hill Christian School (SHCS) seeks to provide a Christian environment that is conducive to the personal (spiritual, academic, social, physical and emotional) growth and well-being of students and staff members.
- 1.2. SHCS seeks to cultivate community that reflects the love of Christ. The school is therefore committed to providing a caring, safe, secure and friendly environment, with staff members who demonstrate by their actions that they can be trusted and respected with regard to godly character and fairness.
- 1.3. Scripture gives instruction about the way that people should treat each other, including:
- 1.4. 'Do to others as you would have them do to you.' Luke 6:31
- 1.5. '... encourage one another and build each other up ...' 1 Thessalonians 5:11
- 1.6. 'Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind". This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself". All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.' Matt. 22:37–40
- 1.7. Discipline is revealed in the Bible to be the task of a wise and loving parent. It is described as:
 - 'the way of life' – an indication of a love of wisdom and knowledge;
 - a means of preventing foolishness and wrongdoing; and
 - the foundation for a life that is productive, peaceful and pleasing to God.
- 1.8. Discipline at SHCS is an intrinsic part of the educational process and, properly understood, should be seen as part of the complete training of a child. It involves modelling and teaching appropriate behaviour as well as shaping and correcting inappropriate behaviour and must be administered with fairness and justice. Proverbs 22:6 says, 'Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it'.
- 1.9. Unacceptable behaviour often results from or leads to conflict between individuals and/or groups. The school is therefore committed to being an example and a training ground for how to prevent and resolve conflict in a biblical way, which includes seeking reconciliation wherever possible (Matt. 5:24b).
- 1.10. This policy relates to all incidents of unacceptable behaviour involving SHCS students occurring during school hours and/or on school premises, and to other incidents of unacceptable behaviour involving SHCS students occurring outside school hours and/or away from school premises where such incidents have adverse implications for an individual's welfare and/or for relationships within the school.

2. Definitions

- 2.1. *Discipline* in its proper sense is the process of 'discipling' or leading someone to become an obedient disciple of Christ. Discipline as such involves many aspects including praise, encouragement, teaching, nurturing, example and correction. It also includes chastisement, censure, warning, punishment and restitution, as well as aspects of justice, graciousness, repentance, forgiveness, restoration and reconciliation.

- 2.2. *Unacceptable behaviour* refers to student actions and words that are inconsistent with the standard of behaviour expected at SHCS (as expressed in the Student Code of Conduct).
- 2.3. *Accountability* refers to the act of reminding students of behavioural expectations and that unacceptable behaviour will lead to consequences that need to be understood and received.
- 2.4. *Perpetrators* refers to those in breach of this policy and related procedures.
- 2.5. *Victims* refers to those wronged by a breach of this policy and related procedures.

3. **Details**

3.1. General

- 3.1.1. Students shall be encouraged and supported in their efforts to make responsible decisions. In a manner consistent with the Student Code of Conduct, respect for the dignity and worth of each student should be evident in all interaction between staff members and students. However, unacceptable behaviour will be addressed and will therefore always have appropriate consequences.
- 3.1.2. Where unacceptable behaviour occurs at SHCS, any individual has the right to expect that incidents will be treated seriously and dealt with promptly and effectively. As a result:
 - perpetrators shall be held accountable for unacceptable behaviour; and
 - victims shall be supported, and their health and well-being given careful and compassionate attention.
- 3.1.3. The school and individual staff members have a duty to take all reasonable measures to protect students in their care from both actual and reasonably foreseeable risks associated with the unacceptable behaviour of other students.
- 3.1.4. In circumstances where unacceptable behaviour has occurred, or is alleged to have occurred, all students shall be entitled to a fair hearing, with the opportunity given to respond by explaining their actions and providing other relevant information.
- 3.1.5. In the case of incidents of unacceptable behaviour occurring outside school hours and/or away from school premises, the school will take reasonable action within the limits of its capacity to do so.
- 3.1.6. The Principal shall ensure that staff members implement the Student Code of Conduct, identify goals and standards for student behaviour, and are consistent with this and other related policies.
- 3.1.7. The Principal shall ensure that the school is proactive in communicating its policy in relation to behaviour and discipline to students, staff members and parents. Such communication shall occur at least annually in the context of maintaining consistent open lines of communication within the school community.

3.2. Teaching practice and curriculum

- 3.2.1. Good teaching and student management practice is regarded as vital to the school's endeavours to proactively address unacceptable behaviour and encourage acceptable behaviour. Staff members are expected to provide a consistent, predictable and secure environment for students.

- 3.2.2. Staff members shall periodically undertake professional development designed to increase awareness of behavioural and discipline issues in schools, and to increase their skill and confidence in dealing with unacceptable behaviour.
- 3.2.3. The Principal shall ensure that teaching in relation to student discipline and behaviour is included in selected areas of the curriculum as part of the school's endeavours to proactively address unacceptable behaviour and encourage acceptable behaviour.
- 3.3. Procedural documents and practices
- 3.3.1. Any procedural documents shall elaborate on different forms of unacceptable behaviour and give examples, and they shall set out clear guidelines for investigating and dealing with incidents of unacceptable behaviour in a consistent and fair manner.
- 3.3.2. Procedures in relation to unacceptable behaviour shall be both preventative (i.e. educating students appropriately to avoid incidents of unacceptable behaviour and educating teaching staff in classroom management to provide appropriate support to students requiring welfare and learning support) and corrective (i.e. acting appropriately as a response to incidents of unacceptable behaviour).
- 3.4. Disciplinary measures
- 3.4.1. Disciplinary and corrective measures in relation to proven incidents of unacceptable behaviour shall be determined in accordance with this policy and any related procedures. **Such measures may vary depending on the nature and seriousness of the behaviour but they shall not include corporal punishment.**
- 3.4.2. While SHCS's desire is to reconcile a student, who has behaved inappropriately to community wherever possible, disciplinary measures may include suspension (including in-school) or expulsion as a consequence of the student's choice to breach partnership with the SHCS community through their behaviour.
- 3.4.3. Factors in determining appropriate disciplinary measures, including suspension or expulsion, shall include the safety and wellbeing of staff members and other students, the capacity of other students to learn to their potential, and the degree to which unacceptable behaviour impacts upon classroom function and effectiveness.
- 3.4.4. Suspension
- The Principal may suspend a student from school for reasons of extreme disobedience or misbehaviour. Such suspension may take the form of an internal suspension, in which case the student spends time in isolation at school, or external suspension, in which case the student does not attend school for the duration of the suspension.
 - The parents of a suspended student will be informed immediately, indicating the reasons for such suspension.
 - The Principal shall add the name of a suspended student to Expulsion/Suspension Register.
- 3.4.5. Expulsion
- The Principal may expel a student from the school where it is deemed that the student continues to behave in ways that are contrary to the school's behaviour expectations despite repeated attempts to help such student modify their behaviour, or where the

student's continued presence in the school is deemed to be placing other students at risk. Where warranted, immediate expulsion may be considered appropriate.

- The parents of an expelled student will be informed immediately, indicating the reasons for the expulsion and reminding them of their obligations regarding their child's compulsory school attendance in the future. The Principal may choose to offer support in finding another school placement.
- The Principal will inform the Chairman of the Board of Directors where the expulsion of a student has occurred.
- The school shall provide academic reports for an expelled student up until the last semester attended, or the current semester if more than half has been attended.
- The Principal shall add the name of an expelled student to the Expulsion/Suspension Register.

3.4.6. Disciplinary and corrective measures in relation to students with a disability or impairment shall take into account the degree to which instances of unacceptable behaviour may be directly related to such disability or impairment and reasonable adjustments shall be made.

3.4.7. Clear lines of communication between school and home are essential at all stages of the student discipline and behaviour process. Therefore, staff members shall ensure that parents are provided with relevant information and contacted in a timely manner to discuss issues of student discipline and behaviour.

3.4.8. In addition to the disciplinary measures outlined in items 3.4.1 to 3.4.4, the following factors shall be considered by staff members:

- While it may be helpful to appeal to a sense of empathy in the disciplinary process, it may be more effective to appeal to a student's sense of justice by helping them think about, discern and verbalise: (1) the factors that might have been in play in a specific situation; (2) what might have been the cause of the behaviour of the participants; and (3) what would be right, helpful and fair for all those involved.
- Students may be more likely to adhere to rules, accept the need for discipline when rules have been broken, and develop a proper response of restitution when they: (1) understand the purpose of the rules; (2) have some ownership in the rule-setting process; and (3) have helped determine the means by which they can make things right and restore the trust of peers.

3.5. Complaints and appeals

3.5.1. While every effort shall be made to resolve student discipline and behaviour issues in a manner consistent with the principles outlined within this policy, it is recognised that there may be occasions when parents and/or students wish to lodge a complaint and/or appeal a decision.

3.5.2. Where a parent wishes to lodge a complaint and/or appeal a decision in relation to a student discipline and behaviour issue, he or she should follow the steps detailed within the Dispute Resolution (Parents) Policy.

3.6. Search, seizure and records

3.6.1. The school has a right to reasonable access to school lockers and desks, which remain the property of the school. Consistent with the school's duty of care to the student body and individual students, where a staff member has cause and reasonable grounds for concern, lockers and desks may be searched without prior notification.

- 3.6.2. In addition to item 3.6.1 above, students may be instructed to empty their pockets, to provide access to personal containers (e.g. school bags, pencil cases) and personal electronic devices (see also the Personal Electronic Devices Policy), and to hand over other personal belongings for inspection. Failure to comply with such instructions shall be regarded as a discipline offence.
- 3.6.3. Students can be instructed to hand over items in their possession such as weapons or items that may be used to disrupt lessons or distract students in class. Where a student refuses to do so, appropriate disciplinary measures will be implemented in accordance with the provisions of this policy and relevant procedures.
- 3.6.4. Any item confiscated from a student, other than as covered in item 3.6.6 below, shall be stored in a secure location pending return to the student or their parents as appropriate, and should not generally be held by a staff member. Confiscated items shall not be destroyed or otherwise disposed of, other than as per item 3.6.6, and shall not be held indefinitely.
- 3.6.5. Information, data, evidence and other items in relation to unacceptable behaviour may be retained by the school. Written records of all relevant incidents, actions and discussions should be made as close in time as possible to the event and stored in a secure location accessible only by the Principal.
- 3.6.6. Further to items 3.6.4 and 3.6.5 above, the school's rights to retain information, data, evidence and other items do not extend to items of a criminal or illegal nature and/or which may place the school or individual staff members in breach of the law. Any such items shall be reported to appropriate authorities as a matter of urgency, stored securely while held, and handed over at the earliest possible opportunity.