



FRANKSTON HIGH SCHOOL

DUTY OF CARE POLICY

Approved September 2018

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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

Definition

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

School authorities in breach of the duty may be liable for injuries inflicted by one student on another, as well as for injuries sustained by a student.

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

Rationale

In addition to their professional obligations, principals and teachers have a legal duty to take reasonable steps to protect students in their charge from risks of injury that are reasonably foreseeable.

Aims

To ensure that staff have an understanding of their duty of care to students, and behave in a manner that does not compromise these legal obligations.

Implementation

- Although the general duty is to take reasonable steps to protect students from reasonably foreseeable risks of injury, specific (but not exhaustive) requirements of the duty involve providing adequate supervision in the school or on school activities as well as providing safe and suitable buildings, grounds and equipment.
- A teacher's duty of care is not confined to the geographic area of the school, or to school activities, or to activities occurring outside the school where a student is acting on a teacher's instructions. The duty also applies to situations both before and after school where a teacher can be deemed to have 'assumed' the teacher pupil relationship.
- The teacher's duty of care is greater than that of the ordinary citizen in that a teacher is obliged to protect a student from reasonably foreseeable harm or to assist an injured student, while the ordinary citizen does not have a legal obligation to respond.

- Whilst each case regarding a teacher's legal duty of care will be judged on the circumstances that occurred at the time, the following common examples may be times when a teacher has failed to meet their legal duty of care responsibilities to their students:-
 - Arriving late to scheduled timetabled yard duty responsibilities
 - Failing to act appropriately to protect a student who claims to be bullied
 - Believing that a child is being abused but failing to report the matter appropriately
 - Being late to supervise the line-up of students after the bell has sounded
 - Leaving students unattended in the classroom
 - Failing to instruct a student who is not wearing a hat to play in the shade
 - Ignoring dangerous play
 - Leaving the school during time release without approval
 - Inadequate supervision on a school excursion
- Staff members are also cautioned against giving advice on matters that they are not professionally competent to give (negligent advice). Advice is to be limited to areas within a teacher's own professional competence and given in situations arising from a role (such as careers teacher, year level coordinator or subject teacher) specified for them by the principal.
- Teachers must ensure that the advice they give is correct and, where appropriate, in line with the most recent available statements from institutions or employers. Teachers should not give advice in areas outside those related to their role where they may lack expertise.

Risks to Students Outside the School Environment

Legal cases establish that a teacher's duty of care does not start nor end at precise times during the day. The approach generally taken is that a teacher's duty applies irrespective whether the risk occurs in or outside the school environment. However, the important issue in all cases will be whether the school took **reasonable steps** to protect the student from the risk.

Risks outside the school environment may sometimes call for immediate and positive steps by a school depending on the age of students, urgency and threat of injury. Consider for example, if a live power line came down outside the school, no emergency workers had arrived, and primary children are about to be dismissed to walk home. No school would allow the children to walk out to that danger unsupervised.

There will be a number of other situations where the school will be under a duty to take reasonable steps. In some instances, the school's control over the activity may require it to take more active measures to satisfy the requirement that it take reasonable steps. For example, a known bully on a school bus may require the school to suspend or refuse to transport the bully.

In other instances, the school may not control the activity, and the reasonable measures available to it will be limited. For example, fights at a local train or bus stop between students from rival schools may involve informing the police, contacting the other school to implement preventative measures, and notices to parents and students.

While older students are often free to move around the buildings and work independently in break out spaces and designated study areas they must be under (indirect) adult supervision at all times. Staff are responsible for their students at all times.

The following instructions and notices **apply to all staff.**

Classroom Supervision

It is **not** appropriate to leave students in the care of ES staff, parents or trainee teachers (At law, the Duty of care cannot be delegated)

It is **not** appropriate to leave students in the care of external education providers for example incursions (At law, the Duty of care cannot be delegated)

In **an emergency situation** use the phone for the Principal or Assistant Principal or contact the teacher in the next room. (if appropriate – send another student for assistance)

No student should be left unsupervised **outside the classroom** as a withdrawal consequence for misbehaviour. Withdrawal is to be conducted by sending a student to a colleague's classroom, or to the Assistant Principal or Principal. This should be accompanied by documentation and appropriate follow up. The teacher, Principal or Assistant Principal **is to be contacted first** to alert them that the student is on their way.

Movement of Children

Care needs to be taken in allowing students to leave the room to work in other areas of the school.

Use of students as monitors outside the room during class time must only occur with the approval of the Principal or Assistant Principal.

Discretion is to be used when allowing students to visit the toilet or the JRC during class time.

Yard Supervision

Yard supervision is an essential element in teachers' duty of care. It is now clearly established that in supervising pupils, teacher's duty of care is one of positive action.

Be aware that children are usually less constrained and more prone to accident and injury than in a more closely supervised classroom.

Be aware that yard duty supervision within the school requires the teacher to fully comply with DET guidelines and brings with it an increased duty of care. It is a teacher's responsibility to be aware of these guidelines and duty of care responsibilities. Teachers are also expected to follow the school's policy whilst on yard duty.

Teachers rostered for duty are to attend the designated area at the time indicated on the roster.

Teachers on duty are to remain in the designated area until the end of the break period or until replaced by the relieving teacher, whichever is applicable.

The handing over of duty from one teacher to another must be quite definite and **must occur in the area of designated duty**. Where a relieving teacher does not arrive for duty, the teacher currently on duty should send a message to the office, **but not leave the area until replaced**.

No changes to the yard duty roster are to be made without the approval of the Daily organiser, or Assistant Principal.

Be alert and vigilant -intervene **immediately** if potentially dangerous behaviour is observed in the yard - enforce the school's behaviour standards and logical consequences for breaches of safety rules.

You should always be on the move and highly visible.

Excursions, Incursions and Camps

Be aware that children are usually less constrained and more prone to accident and injury than in a more closely supervised classroom.

Be aware that an incursion with an external provider does not absolve supervision duties of the teacher, including first aid duties. A teacher must be present at all times and remain the person designated with duty of care responsibilities.

Be aware that camps and excursions outside the school require the teacher to fully comply with DET guidelines and bring with it an increased duty of care. It is a teacher's responsibility to be aware of these guidelines and remain the person designated with duty of care.

Be aware that excursion and camp activities require the teacher to ensure that the venue and transport adhere to DET guidelines.

Be aware that school policy is for students to be counted on and off transport and at other times on a regular basis whilst on excursion or camp activities.

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

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

The teacher in charge or designated teacher of an excursion or camp will carry a mobile phone and a first aid kit.

If the return time from an excursion or camp is delayed, the teacher in charge will contact the school to inform the Principal of the new arrival time so that parents can be contacted and a senior staff member will remain at school until they arrive.

If crossing roads students are to use designated crossing points. Staff are to walk to the middle of the crossing to ensure visibility and orderly crossing. Other staff control the flow of students across the road.

All staff must follow the DET guidelines when organising an excursion, incursion or camp. All procedural steps contained in the School camping, excursions and incursions Policy and Procedure outlines must also be followed.

Incoming and Outgoing Exchange Students and International Students

The VRQA must be notified with the details of all outbound students prior to their departure from Australia, using the Outbound Exchange Student Register.

Outbound students must be registered with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Smart Traveller website prior to departure.

Outbound exchange students en route to the destination country must only travel with international airlines that provide full transfer facilities and have appropriate procedures in the event of flight delays or interruptions.

Outbound students must have up-to-date emergency contact information for airlines, Australian Embassies or High Commissions and other relevant agencies for all destination and transit countries.

For all inbound and outbound students, parents must receive confirmation of the student's safe arrival at the host family as soon as practicable

All inbound exchange students must have a card, provided in advance of home country departure or immediately upon entry to Australia, which lists:

- The exchange student's name
- The host family's address, home telephone number and relevant mobile number
- Emergency contact details for the Frankston High School, the exchange coordinator, the Principal and the Director of the Exchange Program.
- The VRQA's name and email address with a statement as follows:
'Frankston High School is a student exchange organisation (SEO) approved and quality assured in Victoria by the Victorian Registration and Qualification Authority (VRQA). Students can contact the VRQA at vrqa.student.exchange@edumail.vic.gov.au . (The International Students office will assist with this.)

All outbound students must receive appropriate contact information regarding their host family and relevant contact person and that all students and their parents or legal guardians are advised of this information in writing before departure from Australia:

- That Frankston High School is an approved SEO.
- The name of the VRQA and their email address (vrqa.student.exchange@edumail.vic.gov.au).
That students, or their parents or legal guardians, can contact the VRQA regarding the SEO at the VRQA's email address. (The International Students office will assist with this.)

Informing Staff of the legislative Liability of Duty of Care

All staff at our school will be informed of their legal requirement via:

- A copy of this document will be provided to each member of staff at the first staff meeting at the commencement of the school year, and will be placed on the intranet.
- New staff will be informed of their Duty of Care as part of the school's Induction Program
- Duty of Care will be an agenda item at staff meetings and staff will be directed to familiarise themselves with section 6.16.1 of the Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide.
- Staff will complete a risk assessment including duty of care when completing planning for camps, excursions and incursions.
- Staff will be directed to the student wellbeing policy annually.