

Asthma Management Policy

The Hazard

Asthma affects around 11% of Australian children and is one of the most common reasons for school absenteeism and hospital admission in school aged children.

Asthma attacks must be identified quickly and treated correctly to ensure the best outcome for students affected. Teachers and staff must be aware of the symptoms, triggers and best practice management of asthma so they can assist their asthmatic students while at College.

If you think a student may be having a serious asthma attack, call an ambulance and give the student reliever medication in accordance with the student's Asthma Action Plan or the Asthma First Aid Plan.

Legal Obligations

The Victorian Registration Standards (sch 2 cl 12) require that the College must ensure that the care, safety and welfare of all students attending the College is in accordance with any applicable State and Commonwealth laws, and that all staff are advised of their obligations under those laws.

All staff have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to protect a student in their care from risks of injury that are reasonably foreseeable. The keys to prevention of an asthma attack is knowledge of the student who has been diagnosed with asthma, awareness of asthma triggers, and prevention of exposure to those triggers. Partnerships between schools and parents/carers are important in helping the student avoid an asthma attack.

Asthma also falls within the definition of disability for the purposes of both the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic) and the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth). This means that schools must ensure that they do not unlawfully discriminate, either directly or indirectly, against students with asthma. Refer to Disability Discrimination.

Penola Catholic College's Policy

Penola Catholic College is committed to providing a safe learning environment for all our students and complying with the Department of Education and Training's Asthma Guidelines as amended by the Department from time to time (Guidelines).

It is our policy that:

- We provide, as far as practicable, a safe and supportive environment in which students diagnosed with asthma can participate equally in all aspects of the student's schooling
- We adopt the recommendations of the Guidelines where relevant to the College
- Asthma Emergency Kits and other reliever medication are purchased, stored and maintained in accordance with the Guidelines and the College's particular circumstances
- Strategies are in place to communicate with and advise staff, students and parents/carers and to raise awareness about asthma and the College Asthma Management Policy in the College community
- the Principal and other College staff work together with parents/carers of each student diagnosed with asthma to assess risks and develop risk minimisation strategies for the student

- Staff are appropriately trained and have knowledge about asthma and the College's asthma prevention strategies and policies and procedures in responding to an asthma attack.

This policy does not apply to kindergarten and outside school hours care programs, whether run by College or an external education provider. Both these services are regulated by the requirements of the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 (Cth).

Safe Work Practices

Penola Catholic College has developed the following work practices and procedures for managing asthma:

- Identifying Asthma – Causes, Signs and Symptoms
- Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plans
- Asthma Emergency Kits and Reliever Medication
- Asthma Communication Plan
- College Planning and Emergency Response Procedure
- Prevention Strategies
- Asthma Training and Briefings.

Risk Management Checklist

The Principal completes the annual Risk Management Checklist to monitor the College's compliance with the Guidelines and this policy.

We regularly update the Risk Management Checklist in line with any changes to the information on the Department of Education and Training's Asthma Management in Schools page.

Designated Staff Members

The Guidelines recommend that designated staff members are given certain responsibilities for asthma management, including conducting the annual asthma briefing and reviewing reliever medication.

These staff may include a:

- College-employed nurse
- first aid coordinator
- health and wellbeing coordinator or other health and wellbeing staff
- senior/leading teacher.

Penola Catholic College has appointed Dianne Bezzina as the Asthma Supervisor.

Key Definitions

Asthma

Asthma is a disease of the airways. Asthma is a long-term (chronic) disease. Asthma symptoms can be triggered by different things for different people. Common triggers include colds and flu, allergies and cigarette smoke.

People with asthma have sensitive airways in their lungs which react to triggers, causing a 'flare-up'. In a flare-up, the muscles around the airway squeeze tight, the airways swell and become narrow and there is more mucus. This makes it harder to breathe.

An asthma flare-up can come on slowly (over hours, days or even weeks) or very quickly (over minutes). A sudden or severe asthma flare-up is sometimes called an asthma attack.

In this policy, the terms asthma attack and asthma flare-up are both used.

Asthma Action Plan

Also known as Asthma Care Plans and Asthma Management Plans, the Asthma Action Plan lists the student's prescribed asthma medication as well as the signs and symptoms students show when they are experiencing an asthma attack, including treatment for said attack. This plan is one of the requirements of the student's Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plan.

To assist staff in identifying asthma signs and symptoms, including their severity and action to be taken, the Asthma Foundation of Victoria has developed preferred Action Plans for use in schools. These are designed to complement, rather than replace the student's Asthma Action Plan. It is our preference that the Asthma Foundation's Action Plans are used by students.

If a student presents with a different Asthma Action Plan, Dianne Bezzina (Asthma Supervisor) in consultation with the student's parents/carers can transcribe the information on to the specific Asthma Action Plan for Victorian Schools. This Action Plan must be signed by the parent of the student for authenticity and the original Asthma Action Plan provided by the parent must be kept in the student's file.

Asthma Emergency Kit (AEK)

A specific first aid kit for asthma designed to be portable in an emergency.

Asthma Emergency Kits can be purchased from Asthma Australia or the Asthma Foundation and reliever medication is available from pharmacies.

Asthma Education Session

An education session delivered by the Asthma Foundation of Victoria, the National Asthma Council or another asthma peak body designed to educate staff on the basics of asthma. This can be a face-to-face session or online training.

Asthma Management Training Course

This means a course in asthma management training that is accredited as either a:

- VET accredited course in accordance with Part 3 of the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 (Cth) that includes a competency check in the administration of a pressure metered dose inhaler (puffer) and spacer device, or
- course in asthma management training accredited under Chapter 4 of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority that includes a competency check in the administration of a pressure metered dose inhaler (puffer) and spacer device
- any other course including an online course, approved by the Department for the purpose of these Guidelines.

Communication Plan

A plan developed by the school which provides information to all school staff, students and parents about asthma and the school's asthma management policy.

Diagnosed with Asthma

In relation to a student, means a student who has been diagnosed by a medical practitioner as having a medical condition that relates to asthma and is at high risk of having an asthma episode at school.

Exercise Induced Bronchoconstriction (EIB)

EIB (formerly known as exercise induced asthma) is a temporary narrowing of the lower airways, occurring after vigorous exercise. While EIB can occur without asthma, up to 90% of people with asthma experience EIB.

Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plan

An individual plan for each student at risk of asthma, developed in consultation with the student's parents. The Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plan includes the Asthma Action Plan which describes the student's triggers, symptoms, and the emergency response to administer the student's reliever medication should the student display symptoms of an asthma attack.

Reliever Medication

Medication, approved for use by the Commonwealth Government Therapeutic Goods Administration, which can be used to treat a person experiencing an asthma attack. These may include Salbutamol, Bricanyl and Symbicort.

Roles and Responsibilities: Principal

Section 9 of the Guidelines sets out the suggested role and responsibilities of the Principal. The Principal will:

- ensure that the College develops, implements and routinely reviews this policy in accordance with the Guidelines
- actively seek information to identify students with severe life-threatening asthma or those who have been diagnosed with asthma, either at enrolment or at the time of diagnosis (whichever is earlier)
- ensure that parents/carers provide an Asthma Action Plan which has been signed by the student's medical practitioner and that contains an up-to-date photograph of the student
- ensure that an Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plan is developed in consultation with the student's parents/carers for any student that has been diagnosed by a medical practitioner with asthma, where the College has been notified of that diagnosis
- ensure students' Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plans are communicated to staff
- ensure that parents/carers provide the College with reliever medication and a spacer device, if reliever is a puffer, for their child that is not out-of-date and replacement reliever medication when requested to do so
- ensure that an appropriate Communication Plan is developed

- ensure there are procedures in place for providing information to College volunteers and casual relief staff about students diagnosed with asthma and their role in responding to a student having an asthma attack in their care
- ensure that relevant College staff have successfully completed approved asthma training and that their accreditation is current
- ensure that there are sufficient numbers of trained staff available to supervise students diagnosed with asthma while they are under the care or supervision of the College, including excursions, yard duty, camps and special event days
- ensure that all College staff are briefed at least annually by appropriately trained staff member
- allocate time, such as during staff meetings, to discuss, practice and review this policy
- encourage ongoing communication between parents/carers and College staff about the current status of the student's asthma, the College's policies and their implementation
- ensure that the student's Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plan and this policy are reviewed as required
- ensure the Risk Management Checklist for asthma is completed annually
- arrange to purchase and maintain an appropriate number of Asthma Emergency Kits for general use to be part of the College's first aid kit.

Roles and Responsibilities: College Asthma Supervisors

College Asthma Supervisors will:

- have current asthma management training and ensure they have a higher level of knowledge relating to asthma management, in particular in the correct use of a puffer and spacer
- lead the annual asthma College briefing
- conduct regular reviews of the reliever medications to ensure they are not out-of-date
- inform casual relief teachers, specialist teachers and volunteers about this policy, the names of any students diagnosed with asthma, the location of each student's Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plan and reliever medication and each individual person's responsibility in managing an incident
- briefing all volunteers, casual relief staff and new College staff of the College's Communication Plan and their role in responding to a student having an asthma attack in their care.

Roles and Responsibilities: Staff

Section 9 of the Guidelines sets out the suggested role and responsibilities of staff. The College staff will:

- know and understand the requirements of this policy
- know the identity of students who are diagnosed with asthma and know their face
- understand the causes, symptoms, and treatment of asthma
- obtain regular in how to recognise and respond to an asthma attack, including administering reliever medication
- know where to find a copy of each student's Asthma Action Plan quickly, and follow it in the event of an asthma flare-up/attack

- know the College's general first aid and emergency response procedures, and understand their role in relation to responding to a severe or life-threatening asthma attack
- know where students' reliever medication and the Asthma Emergency Kits for general use are kept
- know and follow the prevention and risk minimisation strategies in the student's Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plan
- plan ahead for special class activities (e.g. cooking, art and science classes), or special occasions (e.g. excursions, incursions, sport days, camp, cultural days, fetes and parties), either at the College, or away from the College
- be aware of the possibility of hidden triggers in art supplies, traces of triggers when using items such as paint cleaning chemicals in art or food additives in cooking classes, or students being at risk of an asthma attack when they experience extreme emotions induced at College (e.g. stress during exams)
- raise student awareness about asthma and the importance of their role in fostering a College environment that is safe and supportive for their peers.

Roles and Responsibilities: Parents/Carers

Section 9 of the Guidelines sets out the suggested role and responsibilities of parents/carers of students diagnosed with asthma.

Parents/carers of students diagnosed with asthma will:

- inform the College in writing, either at enrolment or diagnosis, of the student's asthma
- obtain and provide the College with an Asthma Action Plan from the student's medical practitioner that details their condition, and any medications to be administered, and other emergency procedures
- inform College staff in writing of any changes to the student's medical condition and if necessary, provide an updated Asthma Action Plan
- provide the College with an up-to-date photo for the student's Asthma Action Plan and when the plan is reviewed
- meet with and assist the College to develop the student's Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plan, including risk management strategies
- provide the College with reliever medication and spacer device, where the medication is administered by a puffer, that are current and not expired
- replace the student's reliever medication as needed, before their expiry date or when used
- assist College staff in planning and preparation for the student prior to camps, field trips, incursions, excursions or special events (e.g. class parties, cultural days, fetes or sport days)
- inform College staff in writing of any changes to the student's emergency contact details
- participate in reviews of the student's Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plan.

Worker Responsibilities

All workers must follow the asthma management requirements set out in this policy.

Signage

Copies of the Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plan and Asthma Action Plan for each student with asthma are displayed in various locations around the College.

Refer to Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plan.

Implementation

This policy is implemented through a combination of:

- Staff training and supervision
- Maintenance of medical records
- Implementation of prevention strategies
- Effective incident notification procedures
- Effective communication procedures with the student's parents/carers
- Initiation of corrective actions where necessary

Discipline for Breach of Policy

Where a staff member breaches this policy Penola Catholic College may take disciplinary action.

Related Policies

Student Duty of Care (Summary)

Allergy Awareness

Bites and Stings

Critical Incident (Emergency Situations) Response

First Aid

Management of Students at Risk of Anaphylaxis

Medication Administration

Needles and Syringes

Medical Records (Student)

Disability Discrimination

Related Documents

Victorian Asthma Action Plans

Individual Asthma Risk Minimisation Plan Template

Facilitator Guide for Asthma Management

Asthma Management Briefing Presentation

Annual Risk Management Checklist

Prevention Strategies for Schools

Key Reference

This policy has been developed having regard to the Asthma Guidelines for Victorian Schools.

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