

Policies and Procedures for Boarding Schools

A boarding school's policies and procedures must provide for a safe, healthy, secure and supportive boarding environment. The school must provide a clear and comprehensive statement on the boarding school's aims to all students, parents and staff.

Policies should cover, but are not limited to:

- acceptable use of mobile phones
- acceptable use of the internet
- accidents and illness
- administration of personal medicine (including consent from and notification of parents/guardians regarding the administering of first aid and medical care)
- behaviour management (management of student behaviour including but not limited to processes for suspension, expulsion and exclusion)
- bullying and harassment
- communication channels between boarders-parents-staff, including:
 - telephone numbers
 - location of telephones
 - appropriate times that parents can call
 - student email address
 - staff email address
 - fax numbers.
- day-to-day management of the boarding house
- disputes and complaints
- dress code (including uniform, formal and casual dress)
- drug use policy
- enrolment policy for boarders and day students (only if policy is different)
- privacy policy
- rights and responsibilities of boarders
- risk management
- sexual harassment and physical contact
- special aspects of boarding facilities (such as day boarder, week boarder and full-time boarder)
- staff recruitment
- terrorist/bomb threats.

Duty of Care

Policies and procedures for duty of care should cover, but are not limited to:

- 24 hour access to medical staff and facilities
- 24 hour security

- access to counselling and/or pastoral care
- ancillary health services, including facilities and personnel available on-site and off-site and how to access these services
- boarders' chores
- compliance with child protection legislation
- eating disorders
- emergency evacuation procedures
- excursions
- food and nutrition
- formal timetabling – for both weekdays and weekends
- homework and access to assistance with homework
- identification of and support for students with special needs
- infectious diseases
- kitchen facilities in the dining hall and the individual boarding houses
- leave and travel arrangements – day leave, evening leave, weekend leave etc
- occupational health and safety
- protocols for undertaking on-site and off-site activities
- security for personal belongings
- self-harm policy
- sun protection
- supervision arrangements (boarders should be supervised at all times when in the boarding house)
- water-based activities.

School Records

Boarding schools should maintain accurate written records, which should be retained for legal compliance. School records should include, but not be limited to:

- child protection allegations and suspicions
- disputes and complaints
- emergency drills
- individual student records
- medical records, including:
 - administration of medication
 - treatment and first aid
 - serious illnesses and injuries
 - parental permission for medical and dental treatment.
- parental permission and information forms
- working with children and police checks on all staff and volunteers that have access to boarders.

Buildings and Surroundings

All buildings used to accommodate boarding students should meet appropriate standards for the health and safety of all students, including those with disabilities. They should also provide a pleasant environment and promote a sense of wellbeing. All buildings must comply with the Building Codes of Australia, as well as with the Victorian Building Commission.

Schools should have in place procedures for the management of health, safety and security risks, including the handling of dangerous materials.

Buildings meant for housing students must be accessible for all boarders, including disabled students. They must also:

- be suitable for sleeping
- be suitable for studying
- be suitable for meals
- have appropriate washing and lavatory facilities
- be suitably setup to deal with illnesses
- have appropriate storage facilities
- contain natural and artificial light
- contain natural and mechanical ventilation
- be safe, secure and offer privacy
- have plenty of space.

There should be 24 hour security for all students, buildings and facilities within the school grounds.

Boarding school buildings that:

- provide long term or transient living for a number of unrelated persons
- house more than 12 people
- have a gross floor area of more than 300 square metres.

are given a Class 3 building classification, which require schools to comply with the Australian Building Codes Board and the Victorian Building Commission standards and regulations.

Facilities and Equipment

Under the Australian Building Code Regulation 709, Class 3 buildings are required to have hard-wired smoke alarms or smoke detection systems in place. Smoke alarms and detectors must comply with either AS 3786 or AS 1670.1 system regulations.

In addition, under regulation 710, Class 3 buildings must also have fire sprinklers installed in all shared accommodation buildings. The requirements are for an AS 2118.1 or 2118.4 sprinkler system. For further information contact the Victorian Building Commission.

The number of smoke alarms or detectors depends on the building's size and layout.

Smoke alarms and detectors should be positioned to detect smoke before it reaches any sleeping occupants. The alarms should be designed to wake all occupants and give them time to evacuate the building.

Smoke alarms must be located between each area containing bedrooms. In all other habitable areas such as corridors and communal dwelling areas, smoke alarms must be installed no more that 5m from any wall and not more that 10m between detectors.

Depending on the size of the buildings, schools may need to include some or all of the following fire safety regulations:

- automatic fire suppression system
- emergency lighting
- exit signs
- exit systems and paths of travel to exits
- fire doors
- fire drenchers
- fire extinguishers
- fire hose reels
- fire hydrants
- smoke detection and alarm systems
- solid-core doors
- smoke exhaust system.

Boarding schools must also comply with either Class 1 or Class 2 food premises regulations. If the boarders' food is made or delivered by an external company, then they too must comply with the Victorian Food Standards.

Boarding Staff

There should be a sufficient number of boarding staff with the skills to meet the needs of all boarders enrolled in the school. Each staff member, including volunteers who will have contact with the boarders, must have documented and appropriate police clearance and working with children checks.

Boarding staff should:

- be competently trained to administer first aid
- have up-to-date information, induction and training in all matters necessary for the safety and health of the boarding students
- know, understand and practice their legal duty of care responsibilities
- know and practice the school's boarding policies and procedures
- provide close and caring supervision at all times.

Boarding school supervisors may perform the following tasks:

- accompany students on weekend outings.
- ensure students' living and hygiene standards are maintained
- ensure that students are attending classes
- do minor domestic duties
- lend a sympathetic ear to students with problems or provide student counselling services
- maintain good order and behaviour of students
- promote the school philosophy and school activities
- supervise and arrange activities to enhance intellectual, physical, social and spiritual development.

Boarding staff usually consist of a House Master/Mistress, a Deputy House Master/Mistress and three to six tutors, who are either teachers from within the school or external staff appointed to the boarding house. In addition, some schools employ a matron, a receptionist and one to two nurses. A majority of the boarding house staff either live in the boarding house or in adjacent buildings.