

Dorset Primary School 5132

OUT-OF-HOME CARE AND HOMELESSNESS POLICY

PURPOSE

Out-of-Home Care (OOHC) is a living arrangement for children and young people who cannot live in their family home.

The Department requires schools to develop an Individual Education Plan, supported by a Student Support Group, and allocate a mentor for every student in OOHC.

Education makes a significant contribution to the development and wellbeing of all children and young people as well as their future access to employment and life opportunities.

Dorset Primary School will be working in partnership with other government departments and community service organisations to strengthen educational support for children, young people and their families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

DEPARTMENT GUIDELINES

Guidelines have been developed primarily for all primary and secondary schools across Victoria to improve the wellbeing, educational experiences and outcomes of children and young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Specifically, the guidelines assist schools to:

- understand more about homelessness, how and why it occurs and the impact it has on the lives of children, young people and their families
- identify actions that schools can take to improve outcomes for children and young people affected by homelessness, and the principles that underpin these actions
- learn about what others are doing to improve wellbeing, educational experiences and outcomes for children and young people affected by homelessness, especially where these activities involve good practices
- identify key contacts and resources that will enable schools to more effectively identify, engage and support children, young people and their families who are affected by homelessness.

If the school has significant concerns for the wellbeing of a child or young person a report is to be made to DHS Child Protection or Child FIRST.

If a child is experiencing family violence and/ or are wanting advice or information, contact can be made with the Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service on (03) 9322 3555 or toll free 1800 015 188 (24 hours).

If a student who is at risk of or experiencing homelessness and/or are wanting advice or information, a 24 hour, state wide, toll free number (1800 825 955) is available.

EXPECTATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Whole of school approach to supporting students in out-of home care

1. Use a whole of school approach which encourages planning and implementation of evidence based practices that will improve the educational outcomes for students in OOHC.
2. Raise awareness of the special needs and vulnerabilities of students who have been abused and/or neglected and who are living in OOHC.
3. Inform staff about the potential impacts of abuse and neglect, trauma, disrupted attachments, removal from family and placement changes on a student's ability to learn and function within the school and classroom settings and share insights and information about effective practices, initiatives and programs.
4. Identify a key staff member within the school who can act as a buddy/mentor for each student in OOHC. This person could make regular contact with the student and provide additional support in raising and addressing their educational needs.
5. Individual Education Plan must be developed for each student in OOHC.
6. Regular support group meetings to be scheduled.

Individual student achievement

1. In partnership with the student, Child Safety officer, carer and key stakeholders, develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for each student in OOHC who meets the eligibility criteria specified and regularly review and update the IEP to ensure that it continues to meet the student's evolving academic, social and emotional needs.
2. Support students in OOHC to achieve their full potential by maintaining high expectations and setting goals that lead to improve achievement. Ensure every student is engaged in the process of developing and reviewing their IEP and understands the advantages of setting educational goals and identifying resources that might be needed for achieving them. Share information about these expectations and goals with carers, Protective Worker and other professionals.
3. Work in partnership with the Protective Worker to minimise disruptions to school attendance for students in OOHC, including disruptions due to school transfers caused by placement instability and school disciplinary absences.
4. In partnership with the Protective Worker respond to behavioural issues that may impact negatively on the educational outcomes for students in OOHC. Where possible, track issues and intervene early to provide maximum support and use school disciplinary absences as a last resort.

Collaborative partnerships

1. Regularly engage with carers, Protective Worker and other professionals in supporting the learning, participation and achievement of students in OOHC.
2. Support carers to be actively engaged in their child or young person's learning, at home and at school – this may include practical literacy and numeracy activities they can undertake in the home, regular communication about homework, or guidance about additional reading materials they could provide to the child or young person.
3. Contribute, as required other planning processes to ensure relevant educational issues are reflected in plans for intervention with a student in OOHC.

Monitoring progress

1. Regularly monitor and review the educational outcomes for students in OOHC and consider best practice strategies and initiatives that will continue to close the gap between students in OOHC and other students in the school.
2. Review relevant information, as available to ensure that strategies, programs and initiatives are having a positive impact on the achievement of educational outcomes for students in OOHC.
3. The following resources should be used to support the teaching of children and young people in OOHC. The information complements:
Partnering Agreement: Out-of-Home Care Education commitment (pdf – 1,0196.23kb)
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/partnerships/oohcpartneringagree.pdf>
Refer to attached documents to ensure Department Guidelines are followed.