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Policy Name		
Asthma POLICY		
No.1	Version 1.0	
Date 2020	Owner: Anthony Hockey	
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Introduction

Asthma is a disease of the airways – the breathing tubes that carry air into our lungs. Sometimes it is harder for a person with asthma to breathe in and out, but at other times their breathing is normal. Asthma is a long-term (chronic) disease.

Many people think they have asthma only when they have asthma symptoms. In fact, the airways are sensitive all the time and most people with asthma have permanently irritated (inflamed) airways when not taking regular preventer treatment. From time to time, the airways tighten or become constricted so there is less space to breathe through, leading to asthma symptoms.

Asthma causes three main changes to the airways inside the lungs, and all these can happen together:

- the thin layer of muscle within the wall of an airway can contract to make it tighter and narrower – reliever medicines work by relaxing these muscles in the airways
- the inside walls of the airways can become swollen, leaving less space inside – preventer medicines work by reducing the inflammation that causes the swelling
- mucus can block the inside of the airways – preventer medicines also reduce mucus.

Asthma symptoms can be triggered by different things for different people. Common triggers include colds and flu, allergies, and cigarette smoke.

St Mary's is committed to protecting the wellbeing of children and young people with severe allergies. This commitment is enshrined in the Education Training and Reform Act 2006 and more specifically in Schools Policy Advisory Guide, which outlines requirements for schools in the management of asthma.

Approximately ninety per cent of all Victorian schools have a child enrolled who is diagnosed with asthma. The keys to prevent an asthma attack are planning, risk minimisation, awareness and education.

Purpose

This document includes information on the implementation and operation of a policy for the best practice management of asthma in Victorian schools. It is recommended that in

situations where policy alterations are required, the Principal of the school seeks the advice of The Asthma Foundation of Victoria.

Statement

Asthma is a chronic health condition affecting approximately 10% of Australian children and Teenagers (1). Asthma is one of the most common reasons for child admissions to hospital and missed days of school (1). Asthma exacerbations can commonly occur while attending schools, particularly in February and May (1).

In order to meet the duty of care obligations specified by the School Policy and Advisory Guide (SPAG)² and to ensure the health and wellbeing of all students attending, St Mary's Catholic Primary School Williamstown recognises the importance of staff education and the implementation of an asthma policy. The school recognises the importance of involvement and engagement with parents and carers of students and the ability of students to self-manage their asthma where appropriate.

Key points within the SPAG², relevant to an asthma management policy, specify that schools must:

- Obtain a written asthma plan for all students diagnosed with asthma upon enrolment at the school and ensure they are updated at least annually
- Complete a Health Support Plan for students with an identified health care need
- Store medical information and medications appropriately
- Ensure that students feel safe and supported at school
- Provide and maintain at least two asthma emergency kits, with an extra kit required for every 300 students in a large school
- Ensure that key staff (e.g. School Nurses, First Aid Officers, P.E. and Sport Teachers) undertake Emergency Asthma Management (EAM) training and that all other staff with a duty of care for students attend a free asthma education session provided by The Asthma Foundation of Victoria

Scope

- To ensure the whole school community (principals, staff, volunteers, parents and carers and students) are aware of their obligations and best practice management of asthma in the school setting
- To provide the necessary information to effectively manage episodes of asthma within the school

1 Australian Centre for Asthma Monitoring (2011), "Asthma in Australia: with a focus chapter on chronic obstructive pulmonary disease", Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra 2011.

2 School Policy and Advisory Guide, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2011), available at [\[http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/governance/spag/default.htm\]](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/governance/spag/default.htm).

Responsibilities

The Principal/Senior Management will:

- Provide staff with a copy of the school's asthma management policy and ensure staff are aware of asthma management strategies upon employment at the school
- Provide asthma education and first aid training for staff as required
- Provide parents and carers with a copy of the school's asthma policy upon enrolment of their child Identify students with asthma during the enrolment process and provide parents and carers with a blank asthma plan to be completed and signed by the child's medical practitioner and returned to the school
- Ensure Health Support Plans are completed for students with asthma
- Where possible, ensure that all students with asthma have a current written asthma plan (must be updated at least annually)
- Ensure a School Camp and Excursion Medical Update Form is completed by parents/carers for off-site activities where possible
- Ensure the parents and carers of all students with asthma provide reliever medication and a spacer (and a face mask if required) at all times their child attends the school
- Implement an asthma first aid procedure consistent with current national recommendations and all staff are aware of the asthma first aid procedure
- Ensure adequate provision and maintenance of asthma emergency kits for the school and that each asthma emergency kit contains reliever medication, two spacer devices, instructions outlining the first aid procedure and a record form
- Ensure that reliever medications within the asthma emergency kits are replaced regularly and have not expired, and that spacers are replaced after each use
- Facilitate communication between management, staff, parents and carers and students regarding the school's asthma management policy and strategies
- Promptly communicate to parents and carers any concerns regarding asthma and students attending the school
- Identify and minimise, where possible, triggers of asthma symptoms for students
- Ensure that students with asthma are not discriminated against in any way
- Ensure that students with asthma can participate in all activities safely and to their fullest abilities

Staff will:

- Be aware of the school's asthma management policy
- Be aware of the asthma first aid procedure
- Be aware of students with asthma and where their medication and personal spacers are stored
- Participate in Health Support Plan completion as required
- Attend asthma education and training sessions when required
- Be aware of where to access written asthma plans, School Camp and Excursion Medical Update Forms, and asthma emergency kits
- Identify and minimise, where possible, triggers of asthma symptoms for students

- Ensure that students with asthma are not discriminated against in any way
- Ensure that students with asthma can participate in activities safely and to their fullest abilities
- Promptly communicate to the principal, parents and carers any concerns regarding asthma and students enrolled in the school

Parents and Carers will:

- Inform the school if their child has asthma upon enrolment
- Read the school's asthma management policy
- Participate and sign student Health Support Plans as required
- Provide a signed written asthma plan to the school, and ensure that it is updated at least yearly. The initial asthma plan should have the stamp and number of the issuing doctor.
- Provide a School Camp or Excursion Medical Update form as required
- Provide the school with their child's reliever medication along with a spacer (required for 'puffer' medication) for all times the child is attending the school, unless the child is carrying the medication and spacer for self-management purposes
- Ensure that if their child is self-managing their asthma correctly the child carries their reliever medication and spacer at all times
- Promptly communicate all medical and health information relevant to their child, to the principal and staff of the school
- Communicate any changes to their child's asthma or any concerns about the health of their child.

Students will:

- Immediately inform staff if they experience asthma symptoms
- Inform staff if they have self-administered any asthma medication
- Carry asthma medication and a spacer with them at all times (if self-managing their asthma)

Asthma First Aid

Follow the written first aid instructions on the student's Asthma Action/Care Plan. If no specified signed instructions are available, the instructions are unclear, or the person does not have an Asthma Action/Care Plan, begin the first aid procedure immediately (as authorised by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development)

CALL EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO ATTEND (000) IF:

- **The Person's Asthma Symptoms Are Severe**
- **The Person Suddenly Stops Breathing**
- **The Person's Asthma Symptoms Continue To Worsen**
- **There Is No Asthma Action/Care Plan For The Person**
- **Blue/Grey Reliever Medication Is Not Available**
- **You Are Unsure What Is Causing The Breathing Difficulty**

Asthma Emergency Kits

Asthma Emergency Kits should contain:

- Reliever medication

- X2 small volume spacer device
- Record form and Asthma First Aid instruction card

Please note that spacers and face masks are single-person use only. (3) It is essential to have at least two spacers (and two face masks if necessary) contained in each first aid kit and that spacers and face masks are replaced each time they are used.

Further Reading and Resources

Forms mentioned in this policy are available to download free of charge from the Resources section of The Asthma Foundation of Victoria website at www.asthma.org.au

Related Legislation

School Policy and Advisory Guide, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

(2011), www.education.vic.gov.au/management/governance/spag/default.htm Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare (2010), National Health and Medical Research

Council, www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/cd33_infection_control_healthcare_0.pdf

3 National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) (2010), “Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare”, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2010.

Revision Record

Date	Version	Revision Description
No date recorded	1.0	This policy was last ratified
2020	1.0	Reviewed – no changes
2023	1.0	Review due