

**SCHOOL POLICY:** **PLAYGROUND SUPERVISION OF STUDENTS**  
**PUBLISHED:** Schools Bulletin No. 668 dated 15 May 1997  
**IDENTIFIER:** PSS199705  
**CONTACT:** Director, Information, Communications and Governance  
**RELATED POLICIES:** Management of Student Behaviour – Policy and Implementation Guidelines; First Aid; School Sport – Policy and Implementation Guidelines; Excursions Policy and Mandatory Procedures

## 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide guidance to principals and teachers on their duties and obligations in regard to the supervision of students within school buildings and grounds.

## 2 DEFINITION

- 2.1 Parent(s) is inclusive of guardians and legal guardians.

## 3 PRINCIPLES

The legal duty of care requires that teachers should take all reasonable measures to ensure the safety of any school student under their care. This duty of care will arise whenever a student/teacher relationship exists. In the instance of playground supervision, the following apply regarding this duty of care:

- A teacher is to take such measures as are reasonable in the circumstances to protect a student under the teacher's care from risk of harm that the teacher should have reasonably foreseen. This requires not only protection from known hazards, but also protection from those that could foreseeably arise against which preventative measures could have been taken.
- A higher standard of care is required from a teacher for younger students and those with disabilities, since it could be anticipated that these students are less able to understand and/or retain instructions than other students. Generally speaking the rule that the less experienced the student, the higher the standard of care the courts will expect a teacher to exercise.
- The school principal is responsible for making and administering arrangements for adequate playground supervision. Teachers are responsible for carrying out their assigned supervisory duties in such a way that students are, as far as can reasonably be expected, protected from harm.
- It is not just the teachers who rostered on playground duty who have a duty of care. If a teacher walks through the school ground or buildings and notices something that endangers students but does not attempt to do anything about it, the teacher will ordinarily have failed in the teacher's duty of care and the Directorate, as the employer, may be liable to damages which result.

## 4. IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

### Nature of Supervision

- 4.1 Principals are required to make arrangements for the proper and adequate oversight of playgrounds and buildings during the thirty (30) minute period immediately preceding

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#### Playground Supervision of Students

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commencement of the first formal lesson, during the movement of students between lessons and during daily recess periods. In some circumstances, after school supervision may also be required (see 4.6).

- 4.2 Bearing in mind the standard of duty of care required (Section 2), school rules and particular factors affecting the safety of students the principal should assign sufficient teaching staff to playground supervision. The supervising teachers must be able to monitor activities as appropriate to the space, geography of the playground and building area, activity, age, ability and special characteristics of the students, for example, special needs, and be able to provide assistance to students as required.
- 4.3 Supervision arrangements will be determined by the principal in accordance with specific school conditions (see 4.5). This may include actual teacher presence in the playground and/or building areas or teacher observation of students from a point in the school which provides ready access to those students.
- 4.4 In the case of younger students and those with disabilities, supervision should involve teacher presence in the playground and/or other student assembly points and wherever circumstances exist that pose foreseeable risks for students.
- 4.5 The arrangements for supervision will vary according to circumstances in each school and should be made in consultation with the staff. In deciding on the extent and nature of supervision required, principals should give regard to the following factors which will affect student safety:
- the age, level of maturity, ability, number of students, and the nature and characteristics of the students
  - the physical condition of the buildings, the playground area, playground equipment, and special hazards such as building works or motor vehicle traffic
  - student assembly points where climatic conditions necessitate protection from the elements
  - timing and arrangements for arrival and departure of buses, and student bus assembly points.
- 4.6 In some instances, the above guidelines may also apply to after school supervision where:
- students depart by bus
  - there are pedestrian crossings in busy streets
  - there are school sponsored activities in progress after the normal cessation of lessons.
- 4.7 Due care should also be taken of students who, enrolled in another school, attend from special lessons or activities; to students who are billeted; and to students with special needs, including those who are enrolled in mainstream classes.

#### **4.8 Organisation**

- A duty roster should be drawn up by the principal or designate and be available for ready reference by staff and students. A playground duty statement should be made available to all staff outlining areas and activities that teachers must supervise
- Arrangements must be discussed with all teaching staff, including new staff arriving throughout the year, and relief staff, so that all teachers are aware of the arrangements and of their obligations
- The organisation of supervision should avoid unnecessary duplication of duties.

#### **4.9 Instructions to Students**

- Students should be informed of arrangements at least once a term at a formal assembly. Designated playground areas should have clear boundaries, be known by all students, be easily observed and be quickly accessible by teachers
- Students should be informed of where supervising students can be found
- Students should be instructed to seek the help of a supervising teacher in situations which demand it, including the need for first aid
- Students should clearly understand what constitutes safe activities. Unsafe activities should be brought to the attention of students. Unsafe activities include games involving bats of sticks and may include the use of playground equipment.

#### **4.9 Advice to Parents**

The principal should advise all parents or guardians, at least once a term, about supervision times and arrangements. Advice to parents should be included in the school newsletter and school handbook. This should include advice about activities which should not occur prior to commencement of lessons when supervision is limited, and about arrangements in relation to access to the building.

Parents should be advised in writing of any changes to normal arrangements.