Asthma
POLICY

Rationale
Asthma affects up to one in four primary aged children, one in seven teenagers and one in ten adults. It is important therefore for all staff members to be aware of asthma, its symptoms and triggers, and the management of asthma in a school environment.

Definition
Asthma attacks involve the narrowing of airways making it difficult to breathe. Symptoms commonly include difficulty breathing, wheezy breathing, dry and irritating cough, tightness in the chest and difficulty speaking. Children and adults with mild asthma rarely require medication, however severe asthma sufferers may require daily or additional medication (particularly after exercise).

Aim
- To manage asthma and asthma sufferers as effectively and efficiently as possible at school.

Implementation
- Professional development will be provided for all staff on the nature, prevention and treatment of asthma attacks. Such information will also be displayed on the wall in the First Aid room.
- All students with asthma must have an up to date written Asthma Care Plan consistent with Asthma Victoria’s requirements completed by their doctor or paediatrician. Appropriate Asthma Care Plan proformas are available at www.asthma.org.au.
- Asthma Care Plans will be kept in the First Aid Room for reference.
- Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring their children have an adequate supply of appropriate asthma medication with them at school at all times. The medication should be clearly named.
- If a student’s Asthma Care Plan indicates that asthma medication must be administered through a spacer, parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that a spacer is provided to the school. The spacer should be clearly named.
- The school will provide, and have staff trained in the administering of, reliever medication (blue canister) such as Ventolin, Airomir or Asmol and spacer devices.
- The nominated first aid staff member will be responsible for checking reliever medication expiry dates.
- Reliever medication ‘puffers’ may be used by more than one student, as long as they have been used with a spacer.
- Asthma spacers provided by the school are single-person use only. Once a spacer has been used it can be given to that student and replaced in the first aid kit.
- Spacers provided by parents/guardians must be stored in a dustproof container and should be cleaned once a month by the student or parent.
- A nebuliser pump will not be provided by the school. If a student is prescribed a nebuliser they must bring their own to school.

- Care must be provided immediately for any student who develops signs of an asthma attack.

- Students suffering asthma attacks should be treated in accordance with their Asthma Care Plan.

- If no plan is available students are to be sat down, reassured, administered 4 puffs of a shaken reliever puffer (blue canister), delivered via a spacer and inhaling 4 deep breaths per puff, then wait 4 minutes. An ambulance should be called if there is no improvement, or if it is the students first known attack. If necessary administer 4 more puffs and repeat the cycle. Parents must be contacted whenever their child suffers an asthma attack.

- Our school will register as an asthma friendly school – www.asthmafriendlyschools.org.au.

- The school will provide and maintain at least two asthma emergency first aid kits – one to keep at the school, and a mobile kit for activities such as excursions and camps. The asthma emergency first aid kit must contain:
  * blue reliever medication such as Airomir, Asmol or Ventolin;
  * at least 2 spacer devices (one use only);
  * clear written instruction on how to use the reliever medications and devices and steps to be taken in treating a severe asthma attack; and
  * a record sheet/log for recording the details of a first aid incident, such as the number of puffs administered.

- The nominated first aid staff member is responsible for maintaining the emergency first aid kit, including:
  * ensuring all contents are maintained and replaced when necessary;
  * regularly checking the expiry date on the canister of the reliever puffer and replacing reliever medication if expired or if low on doses;
  * replacing spacers in the first aid kit after each use; and
  * disposing of previously used spacers.

References

- School Policy & Advisory Guide

- The Asthma Foundation of Victoria
  www.asthma.org.au

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed every three (3) years or as deemed necessary.