

# 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 for all staff members to be aware of asthma, its symptoms and triggers, and the management of asthma in a school environment. This policy applies to all members of the Findon community.

## AIMS:

- To ensure that Findon Primary School appropriately supports students diagnosed with asthma.
- To explain to Findon Primary School parents/caregivers, staff and students the processes and procedures in place to support students diagnosed with asthma.

## IMPLEMENTATION:

### **Asthma**

Asthma is a long term lung condition. People with asthma have sensitive airways in their lungs which react to triggers, causing a 'flare up'. In a flare up, the muscles around the airway squeeze tight, the airways swell and become narrow and there is more mucus. This makes it hard to breathe. An asthma flare up can come on slowly (over hours, days or even weeks) or very quickly (over minutes). A sudden or severe asthma flare up is sometimes called an asthma attack.

### **Symptoms**

Symptoms of asthma can vary over time and often vary from person to person. The most common asthma symptoms are:

- breathlessness
- wheezing (a whistling noise from the chest)
- tight feeling in the chest
- persistent cough

Symptoms often occur at night, early in the morning or during/just after physical activity. If asthma is well controlled, a person should only have occasional asthma symptoms.

### **Triggers**

A trigger is something that sets off or starts asthma symptoms. Everyone with asthma has different triggers. For most people with asthma, triggers are only a problem when asthma is not well controlled with medication.

Common asthma triggers include:

• exercise	• colds/flu
• smoke (cigarette smoke, wood smoke from open fires, burn offs or bushfires)	• weather changes such as thunderstorms and cold, dry air
• house dust mites	• moulds
• pollens	• animals such as cats and dogs
• chemicals such as household cleaning products	• aerosols (including perfumes, after shaves, hair spray and aerosol deodorant sprays)
• food chemicals/additives	• certain medications (including aspirin and anti inflammatories)
• laughter or emotions, such as stress	

### **Asthma Plans**

- All students with asthma must have an up to date (annual) written Asthma Action Plan consistent with Asthma Victoria's requirements, completed in consultation with their doctor or paediatrician. Appropriate Asthma Action Plan proformas are available at [www.asthma.org.au](http://www.asthma.org.au) or from the school nurse.
- There are specific Asthma forms which are required to be filled out for students attending camp.

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These will be distributed 2 weeks prior to camp and must be returned prior to the commencement of the camp. These forms provide the school with the most current health information for the child with asthma prior to leaving for camp and are in addition to the everyday action plan.

### **Asthma Management:**

If a student, diagnosed with asthma, enrolls at Findon Primary School:

1. Parents/caregivers must provide the school with an Asthma Action Plan which has been completed by the student's medical practitioner. The plan must outline:
  - the prescribed medication taken by the student and when it is to be administered, for example as a pre medication to exercise or on a regular basis
  - emergency contact details
  - the contact details of the student's medical practitioner
  - the student's known triggers
  - the emergency procedures to be taken in the event of an asthma flare up or attack.
2. Parents/Caregivers should also provide a photo of the student to be included as part of the student's Asthma Action Plan.
3. All Asthma Action Plans will be kept in the First Aid room and a copy supplied to the classroom teacher by the school nurse or nominated First Aid Officer.
4. All students diagnosed with asthma are required to have a clearly named, individual student asthma kit at school which contains:
  - their own prescribed reliever medication labelled with the student's name
  - their spacer (as recommended by Asthma Australia).
5. The school nurse may also work with parents/caregivers to develop a Student Health Support Plan, if this is required, which will include details on:
  - how the school will provide support
  - identify specific strategies
  - allocate staff to assist the student.
6. If a student diagnosed with asthma is going to attend a school camp or excursion, parents/caregivers are required to provide any updated medical information, on the Camp Asthma Form.
7. If a student's asthma condition or treatment requirements change, parents/caregivers must notify the school and provide an updated Asthma Action Plan.
8. The school nurse will work with parents/caregivers to review Asthma Action Plans annually.

### **Treatment**

- Students suffering asthma attacks must be treated in accordance with their Asthma Action Plan.
- A student experiencing asthma symptoms does NOT require a care card to enter First Aid and will be treated as a priority.
- Parents/Caregivers are responsible for ensuring their children have an adequate supply of appropriate asthma medication (including a spacer if it is used) with them at school at all times.
- Parents/Caregivers will ensure asthma medication is within the expiry date and the school nurse will be responsible for checking reliever medication expiry dates in care.
- All spacers are individually used for only the specific student. Once a school supplied spacer has been used by a student it must be labelled with their name and parents/caregivers must replace or pay for a new device.
- If no plan is available children are to be sat down, reassured, administered 4 puffs of a shaken reliever puffer (blue canister) delivered via a spacer – inhaling 4 deep breaths per puff, wait 4 minutes, if necessary, administer 4 more puffs and repeat the cycle (as per asthma management best practice - Asthma Australia).

If a student is:

- having an asthma attack
  - having difficulty breathing for an unknown cause, even if they are not known to have asthma,
- school staff will endeavour to follow the Asthma First Aid procedures outlined in the table below. School staff may contact Triple Zero "000" at any time.

<b>Step</b>	<b>Action</b>
1.	Sit the person upright <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be calm and reassuring</li><li>• Do not leave them alone</li></ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek assistance from another staff member or reliable student to locate the student's reliever, the Asthma Emergency Kit and the student's Asthma Action Plan (if available).</li> <li>• If the student's action plan is not immediately available, use the Asthma First Aid as described in Steps 2 to 5.</li> </ul>
2.	<p>Give 4 separate puffs of blue or blue/grey reliever puffer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shake the puffer</li> <li>• Use a spacer if you have one</li> <li>• Put 1 puff into the spacer</li> <li>• Take 4 breaths from the spacer</li> </ul> <p><b>Remember – Shake, 1 puff, 4 breaths</b></p>
3.	<p>Wait 4 minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If there is no improvement, give 4 more separate puffs of blue/grey reliever as above (or give 1 more dose of Bricanyl or Symbiocort inhaler)</li> </ul>
4.	<p>If there is still no improvement call Triple Zero "000" and ask for an ambulance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell the operator the student is having an asthma attack</li> <li>• Keep giving 4 separate puffs every 4 minutes until emergency assistance arrives (or 1 dose of Bricanyl or Symbicort every 4 minutes – up to 3 doses of Symbicort)</li> </ul>
5.	<p>If asthma is relieved after administering Asthma First Aid, stop the treatment and observe the student. Notify the student's emergency contact person and record the incident</p>

Staff will call Triple Zero "000" immediately if:

- the person is not breathing
- the person's asthma suddenly becomes worse or is not improving
- the person is having an asthma attack and a reliever is not available
- they are not sure if it is asthma
- the person is known to have anaphylaxis

### **Communication**

If a student requires support for an asthma event, communication will be emailed via the COMPASS Learning Management System. If the asthma event is an "attack" severe in nature or the first time a child experiences such symptoms, the parent/caregiver will also be telephoned.

At the start of each school year parents/caregivers will be asked to supply a current Asthma Action Plan. If a plan is not supplied the school nurse will send home a blank Asthma Action Plan to be completed in consultation with the medical practitioner as soon as possible. Until the plan is received first aid staff will follow the standard Asthma Management Plan as detailed by Asthma Australia.

### **Staff Training**

- Professional learning will be provided for all staff at the beginning of the school year on the nature, prevention and treatment of asthma attacks. Such information will also be displayed on the staffroom and First Aid room wall.
- An annual asthma briefing will be delivered to staff, as part of the whole school first aid and medical awareness briefing at the beginning of each school year, presented by the school nurse. This will cover aspects such as: the procedures outlined in this policy (policy also available to all community members via the school website), the causes, symptoms and treatment of asthma, identities of the students diagnosed with asthma, how to use a puffer and spacer, and the location of:
  - the Asthma Emergency Kits
  - asthma medication which has been provided by parents/caregivers for student use.
- Non accredited Asthma First Aid management for education staff via online training is free through Asthma Australia, and all staff are encouraged to do this every three years.
- Accredited 3 yearly asthma training is recommended by the Department of Education and Training (DET) for wellbeing staff such as School Nurse, First Aid Officers, Physical Education (P.E) staff and camp organisers. e.g. 22556VIC Course in the Management of Asthma Risks and Emergencies in the Workplace and Asthma Australia Training Courses.

### **Equipment**

- The school will provide and have staff trained in the administering of, reliever puffers (blue canister) such as Ventolin, Asmol and spacer devices in all First Aid kits, including kits on excursions and camps. Clear written instructions on how to use these medications and devices will be included in each First Aid kit, along with

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steps to be taken to treat severe asthma attacks. These kits are single use.

- Each student with asthma will supply their own reliever (blue puffer) and spacer clearly labelled. These will be kept in either the First Aid room, classroom or school bag of the student. The decision where to keep the equipment is in consultation with parents/caregivers, teacher and school nurse. This will depend on need of access, age of student and triggers. e.g. for a mild asthma it is better to keep centrally in the First Aid room, for severe asthma it will need to be with them at all times, ensuring it goes to P.E or sporting events.
- In consultation with the school nurse or nominated First Aid Officer, it is the classroom teacher and First Aid Officers (on the excursion) responsibility to ensure all asthma equipment is taken on excursions and camps.

### **Asthma Emergency Kit**

The school will provide and maintain at least two Asthma Emergency Kits. One kit will be kept on school premises in the First Aid room and one will be a mobile kit for activities such as:

- sports events
- camps and excursions

The Asthma Emergency Kit will contain:

- at least 1 blue or blue/grey reliever medication such as Airomir, Asmol or Ventolin
- at least 2 spacer devices (for single person use only) to assist with effective inhalation of the blue or blue/grey reliever medication (spare spacers are available as replacements). Spacers will be stored in a dust proof container.
- clear written instructions on Asthma First Aid, including:
  - how to use the medication and spacer devices
  - steps to be taken in treating an asthma attack
- A record sheet/log for recording the details of an asthma first aid incident, such as the number of puffs administered.

The school nurse will monitor and maintain the Asthma Emergency Kits. They will:

- ensure all contents are maintained and replaced where necessary
- regularly check the expiry date on the canisters of the blue or blue/grey reliever puffers and replace them if they have expired or are low on doses
- replace spacers in the kits after each use (spacers are single person use only)
- dispose of any previously used spacers as needed.

The blue or blue/grey reliever medication in the Asthma Emergency Kits may be used by more than one student as long as they are used with a spacer. If the devices come into contact with someone's mouth, they will not be used again and will be replaced.

After each use of a blue or blue/grey reliever (with a spacer):

- remove the metal canister from the puffer (do not wash the canister)
- wash the plastic casing
- rinse the mouthpiece through the top and bottom under running water for at least 30 seconds
- wash the mouthpiece cover
- air dry then reassemble
- test the puffer to make sure no water remains in it, then return to the Asthma Emergency Kit.

### **Management of Confidential Medical Information**

Confidential medical information provided to Findon Primary School to support a student diagnosed with asthma will be:

- recorded on the student's file
- recorded on the school's Learning Management System (Compass)
- shared with relevant staff so that they are able to properly support students diagnosed with asthma and respond appropriately, if necessary.

### **Reducing Asthma Triggers**

- Dust is kept to a minimum through the daily cleaning and regular dusting process as undertaken by our cleaning contractors.
- The mowing of lawns will be undertaken in consideration of weather conditions and will preferably

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- occur before or after school hours or whilst students are in class,
- Planting of low pollen gardens.
  - Carpets and curtains are cleaned regularly.
  - Turning on of fans and heaters out of hours when being used for the first time after a long period of non use.
  - Monitoring pollen count and weather patterns, being aware of severe weather warnings including thunderstorm asthma alerts and act as per Department of Education and Training (DET) guidelines.

**COMMUNICATION & EVALUATION:**

This policy shall be reviewed as part of the school's annual policy and process review. This policy is communicated to the school community via the website, access through the school office, through the school newsletter, Foundation induction process and in individual cases. The policy is tabled at staff briefing and discussed as part of the start of year induction process.

**REFERENCES:**

DET Policy Advisory Library <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/asthma/policy>

Asthma Australia: <https://asthma.org.au/>

22556VIC Course in the Management of Asthma Risks and Emergencies in the Workplace.

<https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/22556VIC>

Findon Primary School Medical Policies

<https://www.findonps.vic.edu.au/index.php/school-policies/>