



# THE SCHOOL

- Teachers and pastoral care—Alan • Kylie
- Teachers and duty of care—Vanessa • Judy
- Teachers as leaders—Kristine
- Teachers as change agents—Sophie
- Teachers and collaboration—Robyn
- Teachers relating to teachers—Tara
- Teachers supervising teachers—Veronica
- Teachers and professional development—  
Philippa • Ken
- Teachers and conflict mediation—David

alan

**Descriptors: pastoral care, student welfare, relationships with students**

**Overview: This case relates the ways in which Alan both conducts his own pastoral care and co-ordinates the school's welfare policy involving 60 second encounters and time-outs.**

---

Alan teaches Grade 6 in a small school of 317 students in a middle class suburban area. The school population is relatively homogeneous culturally, though there is a significant number of Korean children. While Alan has 17 years of teaching experience, he has only been at the school for 18 months, and therefore inherited the student welfare policy he now co-ordinates.

The policy is based on Glasser's choice theory and reality therapy, and was introduced as a departure from the previous policy to focus on children accepting responsibility for their behaviour, and not behaving as a result of fear or rewards. Consequently, a 'discipline code' was introduced to each classroom. It consisted of 'rights', 'rules' and 'responsibilities' displayed attractively on four coloured and laminated sheets. Apart from this poster presentation, it was demonstrated at school assemblies through role plays. For the 'right', 'I have the right to be treated with respect and courtesy', the rule is 'treat others as you would like to be treated'. The corresponding responsibilities include: 'I will be courteous and considerate to my fellow students, teachers, other staff members, community members and all visitors to our school'; 'I will work without interrupting others'; and 'I will be honest and truthful'.

If a student's classroom behaviour is unacceptable, there is a '60 second encounter' with the student, in which the teacher asks 'What are you doing?', 'Is it helping?', 'Is it keeping the rules?' and 'What is your plan to do better?'. The teacher may also say 'it looks as though you are having a problem', 'calm down', 'What are you supposed to be doing?', 'Can you do that?', and 'thank you, I appreciate that'. As Alan reports, there is no need to elicit a reason as to why the student behaved in such a way.

Further unacceptable behaviour typically results in the student being isolated in a 'time-out' area in the classroom, when a 'my plan' sheet with name and signature has to be completed. For the younger students, there are two requirements: 'draw a picture of what you were doing' and 'draw a picture of how you can make things better'. For the older students, the plan sheet is more comprehensive: apart from statements 'what I was doing', 'what I wanted' and 'what I could do differently', the student can indicate whether the teacher's help is needed in making the plan, and there is a section for the student to indicate the nature of the plan.

To foster self-discipline, students are also encouraged to go to the time-out area voluntarily, particularly if they feel angry and are likely to do something they might regret.

Of course there are further provisions for continuing unacceptable behaviours. A student may be sent to a 'buddy class', usually the class next door, and stay there for the remainder of the session, or may be sent to the supervisor or principal. There are also certain behaviours that 'fall outside the plan'. For instance, time-outs and 60 second encounters are difficult to enforce while at sport or on excursions. The generally applied rule is that parents will be notified if a student has to be spoken to twice. Furthermore, if students are caught using weapons or drugs, there are strict Department guidelines to follow.

Apart from the discipline code, the school adopts many strategies to recognise and reinforce student achievement. There are merit awards, sports awards, and a principal's award conferred at assembly. There is also 'Aussie of the Month' nominated by each class and voted by the teachers for citizenship within and beyond the classroom. Students also learn responsibility through the peer support program, and through the Student Representative Council which is conducted by the school captains and which has representatives from Grades 2-6.

The Student Welfare Policy also contains suggestions for promoting good behaviour: 'children evaluating their own work'; 'setting achievable goals'; 'performing in and for the community'; 'maximising student achievement'; 'remediation and counselling'; and 'providing a challenging program'. Alan sees a link between enjoyment and learning. 'If I don't think a child looks right', he reports, 'I'll ask what the matter is'. He believes that journal writing for the older students is a helpful way of identifying or even communicating problems. He does though indicate the difficulty for a male teacher in the current climate to 'provide comfort or even talk to someone'. His own class comprises 22 girls and 11 boys.

He recalls a conversation with a boy at his previous school whose father died from cancer. It was the same year that Alan lost his own father, and he was able to provide solace and affirm for the boy that 'it's all right to feel that way'. He believes that personal problems are apparent if you are 'watching what's going on'. It's a matter of 'keeping the antennae up'.

For Alan, the underlying principle in pastoral care is 'trying to make them more responsible as they grow up'. He believes in 'talking to the students and treating them as adults'. And he believes that 'getting angry doesn't help'.

---

### **Case questions**

1. Evaluate the 60 second encounter. Why aren't students asked why they behaved in a particular way?
2. Appraise the school's use of the time-out area. Comment on the use of 'my plan'

sheets, and the practice of allowing students to go voluntarily to the time-out area.

3. Alan claims that 'getting angry doesn't help'. When is a teacher's expression of anger legitimate and not legitimate?
4. To what extent should a teacher act as counsellor for a student's personal problems? At what stage should the student be referred to the school counsellor?

### Topic questions

1. Devise your own ideal pastoral care/student welfare program.
2. Can/should student welfare be taught in classrooms? If so, in what key learning area and using what content and strategies?
3. To what extent should students be involved in determining the nature of pastoral care or student welfare programs?
4. Could all pastoral care requirements be met through peer support programs?

kylie

**Descriptors: pastoral care, student welfare, relationships with students**

**Overview: This case relates the ways in which Kylie promotes pastoral care in her Catholic school through a buddy system, the teaching of conflict resolution, the management of student behaviour, the critical incident team, and the exercise of responsibility through the school council.**

---

The five-year strategic plan was finished at Kylie's school yesterday, and pastoral care was one of the eight priorities. As well as co-ordinating pastoral care, Kylie is a Kindergarten teacher who has been at this Catholic upper middle class school of 400 students for nine years. The school population is almost exclusively Anglo-Saxon, and this is surprising as the suburb is densely populated by Asian-Australians.

Claiming that the old pastoral care policy is ready for revision, Kylie identifies five expressions of pastoral care: the school buddy system; the teaching of conflict resolution, the management of student behaviour (guided by the Student Management Guidelines); the critical incident team; and the exercise of responsibility through the school council.

First, the school has a class buddy system. Kindergarten has Grade 6 as buddies; Grade 2 has Grade 4; and Grade 5 has either Grade 1 or Grade 3. The two classes are timetabled together once per fortnight. They may do gross motor, art or craft together; they may listen to each other read or be the audience for presentations; or they may go to the library together. Each child has an individual buddy and the

teachers try to match students on the basis of personality but not necessarily according to gender. Siblings though are not placed together. When the students go to church, buddies sit with each other. 'It's wonderful', Kylie claims, and indicates that buddies often make little presents for each other, and observe birthdays.

Once a year, the school celebrates 'buddy day'. It is preceded by a week of activities, and the discussion of books and videos from the Elana and Madeleine Foundation (two girls killed in the Port Arthur massacre). On buddy day the students have lunch together and spend the afternoon in shared activities. They often buy bears for each other from the Foundation that carry the message 'I'm special because I care about others'.

Second, conflict resolution is taught in religious education. 'Celebrating Our Journey' is the religious education syllabus, which comprises 30 minutes of teaching each day. Apart from explicit teaching, conflict resolution is typically examined in role plays of appropriate behaviours in a variety of contexts. Students also perform their resolutions of various scenarios at the school assembly, and there is a lot of reflective work, particularly through writing about feelings in student journals. The school also teaches 'values education' by focusing on the values of respect, justice, generosity and kindness.

Third, while the management of student behaviour is regulated by the Student Management Guidelines, Kylie argues that behaviour management is not a problem. There are no coloured cards or levels, and no detentions. Kylie explains that there is no bullying policy because it has never been a problem. Disputes or poor student behaviour are typically managed by the class teacher or teacher on duty, and classroom problems are usually addressed through classroom discussions of conflict resolution.

The more serious problems are sent to the assistant principal who endeavours to obtain a full explanation for the cause of the misbehaviour. She typically engages the student in discussions as to what strategies could be adopted in the future ('What could you do and say if it happened again?'). These interviews are fully documented so that the transcripts can be used at a mandatory parent interview that follows. While there are no detentions, levels or lines, the student may be required to formally apologise or do some form of community service like sweep the stairs or pick up papers, and there is always follow-up on the student.

Fourth, there is a 'Critical Incident Policy' for incidents as diverse as trauma from bereavement, emotional and psychological distress, or a bomb scare. The critical incident team comprises the principal, deputy principal, Kylie and another executive teacher, all of whom have established responsibilities, including which staff member to contact when there is an incident. The Catholic Education Office (CEO) has a support team that can visit and assist schools immediately. They also publish material providing comfort and reassurance on their website.

A fifth form of pastoral care is the leadership responsibility provided through holding office on the school council, which Kylie has co-ordinated for the past four years. The council comprises four captains, who may be boys or girls, and eight house leaders, as well as one class representative from each class in Grades 4, 5 and 6. Leadership features in the Personal Development Program in Grade 5 to prepare students for Grade 6 leadership. Kylie also conducts two workshops on leadership each year, which focus on the qualities displayed by leaders in the world, and she takes students to Young Leaders Workshops. 'These are meant to inspire', she comments, 'and to encourage students to take responsibility and a high profile'. Kylie is excited by the pastoral care impact of the student council and believes that 'the profile of our school council has lifted over the years as children select others for their quality, and not just because they are friends'.

Perhaps another potent factor in the success of the school's pastoral care is the fact that 'the parent community supports us unbelievably'. Kylie reports on the findings of a recent parent survey which were 'amazingly affirming', particularly in terms of the caring of teachers towards students and families. 'With any tragedy in the school, the whole staff rallies', Kylie claims. 'People look out for each other, and this goes down to the children'.

---

### **Case questions**

1. Appraise the collective value of the five strategies adopted for pastoral care in Kylie's school.
2. Comment on the buddy system at Kylie's school. Do you support both buddy classes and individual buddies? List the possible strengths and limitations of such a system.
3. Conflict resolution is taught in religious/values education at Kylie's school. If you were to teach towards student welfare, what and how would you teach?
4. At Kylie's school, the parent community is 'amazingly affirming'. How significant is the culture of schools generally and this school in particular in shaping pastoral care provisions?

### **Topic questions**

1. Develop a set of exit outcomes for a pastoral care program.
2. Create a repertoire of pastoral care strategies for the typical school.
3. To what extent is pastoral care a teacher's or school's responsibility? Is it an educational, moral or legal responsibility?
4. Discuss the relationship between school pastoral care and home pastoral care. Do they need to be mutually supportive?