

# ASTHMA MANAGEMENT POLICY

## RATIONALE:

"Asthma is a disease of the airways, the small tubes which carry air in and out of the lungs. When you have asthma symptoms the muscles in the airways tighten and the lining of the airways swells and produces sticky mucus. These changes cause the airways to become narrow, so that there is less space for the air to flow into an out of your lungs" (National Asthma Council 2011)

Baden Powell College for each student diagnosed with asthma will maintain a written:

- Asthma Action Plan
- Student Health Support Plan.

If a student develops signs of what appears to be an asthma attack, appropriate care must be given immediately.

## IMPLEMENTATION:

### Assessing the severity of an asthma attack

Asthma attacks can be:

- **Mild** - this may involve coughing, a soft wheeze, minor difficulty in breathing and no difficulty speaking in sentences
- **Moderate** - this may involve a persistent cough, loud wheeze, obvious difficulty in breathing and ability to speak only in short sentences
- **Severe** - the student is often very distressed and anxious, gasping for breath, unable to speak more than a few words, pale and sweaty and may have blue lips.

All students judged to be having a severe asthma attack require emergency medical assistance.

Call an ambulance (dial 000), notify the student's emergency contact and follow the '*4 Step Asthma First Aid Plan*' while waiting for the ambulance to arrive. When calling the ambulance state clearly that a student is having 'breathing difficulties.' The ambulance service will give priority to a person suffering extreme shortness of breath. Regardless of whether an attack of asthma has been assessed as mild, moderate or severe, Asthma First Aid (as detailed below) must commence immediately. The danger in any asthma situation is delay. Delay may increase the severity of the attack and ultimately risk the student's life.

### Asthma First Aid

If the student has an Asthma Action Plan, follow the First Aid procedure immediately. If no, Asthma Action Plan is available in the steps outlined below should be taken immediately.

### **The 4 Step Asthma First Aid Plan (displayed in Sick Bay and classrooms)**

#### **Step 1**

Sit the student down in as quiet an atmosphere as possible. Breathing is easier sitting rather than lying down. Be calm and reassuring. Do not leave the student alone.

#### **Step 2**

Without delay give 4 separate puffs of a blue reliever medication (*Airomir, Asmol, Epaq or Ventolin*). The medication is best given one puff at a time via a spacer device. If a spacer device is not available, simply use the puffer on its own. Ask the person to take 4 breaths from the spacer after each puff of medication.

#### **Step 3**

Wait 4 minutes. If there is little or no improvement repeat steps 2 and 3.

#### **Step 4**

If there is still little or no improvement; call an ambulance immediately (dial 000). State clearly that a student is having 'breathing difficulties.'

Continuously repeat steps 2 and 3 while waiting for the ambulance.

### **Asthma Kits**

Asthma emergency First Aid kits must contain:

- blue/grey reliever medication such as Airomir, Asmol, or Ventolin
- at least 2 spacer devices to assist with effective inhalation of the blue/grey reliever medication (ensure spare spacers are available as replacements)
- clear written instructions on:
  - how to use these medications and devices
  - steps to be taken in treating a severe asthma attack
- a record sheet/log for recording the details of a first aid incident, such as the number of puffs administered - record sheets can be downloaded from the Asthma Foundation of Victoria web site.

Asthma emergency first aid kits should be located strategically around the school. Mobile asthma emergency kits are also required for:

- office/administration
- yard duty
- excursions
- camps.

### **EVALUATION:**

- This policy to be reviewed as part of the school's two year review cycle, individually, in teams and with the community in 2017 or more often if necessary due to changes in regulations or circumstances