



**Australian Government**

**Quality Teacher  
Programme**

## Secondary case two

This case is open-ended and is designed to generate rich discussion about leadership issues affecting all head teachers.

### Setting the scene

A Year 9 student has been coming to class without equipment, his appearance is often unkempt and he is reluctant to undertake any work. He often puts his head on the desk and leaves his bag unopened. However, until now, he has usually responded to requests from the teacher to begin work.

Today, the teacher has had to speak sternly and the student has reacted by yelling abusive language. 'You ..... . You're always picking on me!'

The teacher has sent another student to you with a note. The note provides details of this incident and the teacher has also written that under no circumstances will this student be admitted back into class.

The next day you receive a similar note from the teacher about another student in the same class. This situation appears to be ongoing.

### Individual reflections

1. What are the key issues?
2. As head teacher, what do you do?

## Leadership issues

<b>Educational</b>	pedagogy, programs, assessment, reporting, learning styles, learning environment, learning community
<b>Organisational</b>	timelines, resources, management, systems, accountability
<b>Strategic</b>	planning, vision, values, culture
<b>Personal</b>	social skills, ethics, commitment, personal vision
<b>Interpersonal</b>	relationships, team building, conflict resolution, communication

## Focus questions

### Educational

1. Outline some of the issues that could be the cause of this outburst.
2. How can you investigate the previous history of the student? What data should you access?
3. How could the teacher's teaching style or approach have contributed to the student's outburst? What are the possible teaching/learning issues that may have led to this situation?
4. In what way could the teacher/student relationship contribute to or diminish the outburst?
5. Have alternative teaching/learning strategies been exposed across the faculty to accommodate the needs of all students?
6. How do we share positive approaches to promoting student learning within the faculty?
7. In your faculty what are the values that underpin student learning and welfare?

### Organisational

1. How will you approach the student and the teacher?
2. Does your faculty need to clarify the role of class teacher? Some teachers are making comments such as... 'welfare is not my job, I'm here to teach.' How do you respond? How do you link teaching/learning with welfare?
3. Does the faculty need to discuss welfare and pedagogy?
4. What DET or school policies do you need to access to help you deal with behaviour, welfare and learning of the student?
5. What tools such as, Australian National Schools Network protocols, PMI, SWOT analysis, could you use to facilitate discussion and consensus?

### Strategic

1. What strategies and policies does the faculty need to promote positive student learning and behaviour?
2. How does the schools welfare policy and faculty policy help address the needs of the teacher and the student?

## Personal

1. How will you respond if the teacher had knowledge of the situation but still chose an approach which was almost certain to exacerbate it? Do they realise what they are doing? Are both the teacher and the student taking responsibility?
2. What approach will you use to conduct an audit of teacher knowledge of student welfare strategies and skills? Will this be formal or informal?
3. What personal skills will be required to remind teachers of their duty of care? How will you do this?

## Interpersonal

1. How will you work with the teacher to solve the issue?
2. How will you negotiate a resolution to the issue so that both stakeholders feel their needs are met and that there will not be a repeat performance?
3. How will you use skilful listening and questioning skills to clarify the real issues with both the student and the teacher?

## Considerations

**Notes to facilitators:** It is the process of analysing the case and the issues that is important in using the cases as a professional development tool. A selection of DET policy documents made available for quick referencing by participants will support informed decision making.

If participants are from the same school, they may identify with key issues in the case and become snared in a discussion of school-specific problems. Sensitive intervention and guidance back to the case may be required.

Using the considerations or sample solutions too early may defeat the purpose and value of head teachers reflecting on the issues and their own practice. It should be remembered that a single issue case is in fact highly complex. If limited time is available, groups could analyse different leadership domains or focus on just a few issues.

## Educational

- Is the student connected to the school welfare system? Who needs to be involved?
- Is professional learning about pedagogy or welfare required?
- How will this occur?
- Conduct professional learning meetings to tease out underlying beliefs about teaching, learning and welfare?
- How can you remedy any issues that arise from professional learning meetings?

## Organisational

- How will the situation and teaching methods be monitored?
- How will you identify and prioritise the professional development issues and how will you develop an action plan?

## Strategic

- The student's behaviour needs a resolution. What will you do? How will the teacher's response be addressed?
- How can you nurture a faculty culture so that welfare is acknowledged as fundamental to effective teaching and learning?
- How do you identify areas for improvement?
- Does every member of the faculty have a clear understanding of school policies and procedures relating to welfare policy and procedures?
- What strategies/tools will you use to initiate discussion and then implement changes?

## Personal

- How can the situation be clarified?
- What will be the appropriate response when dealing with emotional reactions from the student and the teacher?
- What types of negotiation skills might need to be employed to resolve the situation?
- Would it be appropriate to use a critical friend with whom to review the issue?
- How will you discover if there are any underlying issues for the student or the teacher that caused this behaviour or situation?

## Interpersonal

- How will you seek a solution that supports both the teacher and the student and empowers each to behave differently next time?
- Where and when will the resolution take place? What conversations will need to take place?
- Do you give the teacher an opportunity to debrief and possibly express dissatisfaction with the outcome?
- How do you facilitate effective communication with the teacher and student?
- How do you maintain the relationship between the head teacher and teacher and the student?
- The problem is immediate – the process of resolving the issue must begin immediately.
- Is the demand for an apology going to be an impediment to the resolution of this issue?
- Is the demand for an apology reasonable?
- Have protocols been negotiated to work through difficult situations with students and teachers?
- What will be the indicators of your success?

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### Disclaimer

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training.

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