Asthma Policy

Rationale:
Students with asthma have sensitive airways in their lungs. When exposed to certain triggers their airways narrow, making it hard for them to breathe.
Three main factors cause the airways to become narrow:

- The inside lining of the airways becomes red and swollen (inflammation)
- Extra mucus (sticky fluid) may be produced
- The muscle around the airways tightens (bronchoconstriction)

How do you recognise asthma?
- Shortness of breath
- Wheeze
- Chest tightness
- A dry, irritating, persistent cough, particularly at night/early morning, with exercise or activity

Asthma triggers
Every student’s asthma is different. Not all students will have the same triggers, nor will they react to every trigger. Some triggers include:
- Common triggers may include:
  - Colds and flu
  - Exercise/activity (idiopathic)
  - Inhaled allergens (e.g. pollens, moulds, animal dander and dust mites)
  - Environmental factors (e.g. dust, pollution, wood smoke and bush fires)
  - Changes in temperature and weather
  - Chemicals and strong smells (e.g. perfumes, deodorants and cleaners)
  - Emotional factors (e.g. laughter, stress)
  - Some foods and food preservatives, flavourings and colourings

Aims
At Our Lady Help of Christians we aim to:

- provide a safe and supportive environment for students and staff with asthma;
- identify children with asthma during the enrolment process and provide parents and carers with a written asthma plan to be completed in consultation with a medical practitioner;
- ensure staff identify children in their care with asthma and are able to locate where medication and personal spacers (and face masks) are stored;
- maintain current Emergency Asthma Management training and qualifications;
- ensure that children with asthma can participate in all activities safely and to their fullest abilities;
- Asthma First Aid posters are on display and information is available for staff and parents;
- provide and maintain at least two asthma emergency kits

References: Asthma Foundation of Victoria
Implementation

Principal (or Principal Nominee)/First Aid Officer:
- Display Asthma First Aid Poster in the First Aid Room
- Provide asthma education and first aid training for staff as required
- Provide staff with a copy of the school’s asthma management policy and ensure staff are aware of asthma management strategies upon employment at the school. Ensure that reliever medications within the asthma emergency kits are replaced regularly and have not expired
- Facilitate communication between management, staff, parents and carers and students regarding the school’s asthma management policy and strategies
- Promptly communicate to parents and carers any concerns regarding asthma and students attending the school
- Minimise exposure to known triggers
- Register the school as an Asthma Friendly School

Staff:
- Document any asthma attack and advise parents/carers as a matter of priority
- Be aware of the school’s asthma management policy
- Be aware of the asthma first aid procedure
- Be aware of students with asthma and where their medication and personal spacers are stored
- Attend asthma education and training sessions when required
- Be aware of where to access written asthma plans, School Camp and Excursion Medical Update Forms, and asthma emergency kits
- Identify and minimise, where possible, triggers of asthma symptoms for students

Parents/carers:
- Provide an Asthma Care Plan, signed by the treating doctor
- Provide their child’s medication, clearly dated and in the original labelled container. A spacer, and mask as required, should also be supplied
- Alert staff to any changes in their child’s asthma management
- Provide a School Camp or Excursion Medical Update form as required

Students:
- Are supported to self-manage their asthma and recognise their triggers
- Immediately inform staff if they experience asthma symptoms
- Inform staff if they have self-administered any asthma medication

Recognising an Asthma Attack

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mild</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Severe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TALK IN SENTENCES</td>
<td>SHORTENED SENTENCES</td>
<td>FEW WORDS PER BREATH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cough</td>
<td>Persistent cough</td>
<td>Persistent cough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft wheeze</td>
<td>Loud wheeze</td>
<td>Wheeze may be absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor difficulty breathing</td>
<td>Difficulty breathing</td>
<td>Gasping for breath/distress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tightness in chest</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pale, sweaty blue lips</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young children may complain of a sore tummy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Muscle exertion</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Asthma First Aid

Sit the student upright and give reassurance. Do not leave the student alone.
Follow the written first aid instructions on the student’s Asthma Action/Care Plan.
(Refer to Asthma First Aid Poster below)

If no specific and signed instructions are available, the instructions are unclear, or the person does not have an Asthma Action/Care Plan, begin the first aid procedure immediately (as authorised by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development).

References: Asthma Foundation of Victoria
Call emergency assistance to attend (000) if:
- the person’s asthma symptoms are severe
- the person suddenly stops breathing
- the person’s asthma symptoms continue to worsen
- there is no Asthma Action/Care Plan for the person
- blue/grey reliever medication is not available
- you are unsure what is causing the breathing difficulty

**Asthma First Aid**

1. **Sit the person upright**
   - Be calm and reassuring
   - Do not leave them alone

2. **Give 4 separate puffs of blue/grey reliever puffer**
   - Shake puffer
   - Put 1 puff into spacer
   - Take 4 breaths from spacer
   - Repeat until 4 puffs have been taken
   - **Remember:** Shake, 1 puff, 4 breaths
   - All cases of asthma have a blue/grey reliever called Symbicort

3. **Wait 4 minutes**
   - If there is no improvement, give 4 more separate puffs of blue/grey reliever as above
   - (OR give 1 more dose of Seretide or Symbicort metered)

4. **If there is still no improvement call emergency assistance (DIAL 000)**
   - Say ‘ambulance’ and that someone is having an asthma attack
   - 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 more doses of Symbicort)

**Call emergency assistance immediately (DIAL 000)**
- If the person is not breathing
- If the person’s asthma suddenly becomes worse, or is not improving
- If the person is having an asthma attack and a reliever is not available
- If you are not sure if it’s asthma
- If the person is known to have Anaphylaxis - follow their Anaphylaxis Action Plan, then give Asthma First Aid.
- Blue/grey reliever medication is unlikely to harm, even if the person does not have asthma

**Asthma Australia**
Contact your local Asthma Foundation
1800 ASTHMA (1800 278 452) asthmaaustralia.org.au
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**Evaluation:**
This policy will be reviewed as part of the school’s review cycle or as required.
We will:
- Seek recommendations by The Asthma Foundation Victoria

This policy was last ratified by OLHC School Staff Term 2 2015

References: Asthma Foundation of Victoria