

The Pastoral Care Focus Group: A practical strategy for ensuring consistent, coordinated and effective delivery of pastoral care support to all international students in a school setting

Philip Moon

St Peter's School, Cambridge. Private Bag 884 Cambridge, New Zealand www.stpeters.school.nz
philipm@stpeters.school.nz and edventure@clear.net.nz

The Pastoral Care Focus Group has functioned at St Peter's School, Cambridge for 18 months. The group was established to ensure every student has ready access to effective and sustained support. School life for both students and staff is characterised by a complex and busy range of academic, extra curricular and interpersonal activities and interactions. Individual student concerns and difficulties can easily be overlooked in this setting.

The group meets weekly to discuss students at risk. A clearly defined meeting format ensures discussion is focused and relevant. Support aims to equip students with the personal skills and understandings needed to become self sufficient in coping with a problem. To ensure at risk students are reported to the Focus Group, all school staff are informed of protocols and contact points.

Meeting content is recorded on an "at risk template". This template is distributed electronically in two forms to protect student confidentiality. Information about a particular student may also be shared with boarding staff, host parents and student mentors to build a network of support for each student.

A well advertised open door policy ensures all students have quick access to one of five international support staff. Students are also encouraged to use an online booking system. Critical to the successful functioning of the group is the inclusive nature of the process. The role of the Focus Group is frequently explained in International Department publications to raise awareness among academic staff, host families, parents, and student leaders. Above all, the group aims to successfully deliver effective support so everyone has trust in the process.

Those who attend the presentation will be given an opportunity to deconstruct this model.