



# **SACRED HEART**

## **PASTORAL CARE OF STUDENTS IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS POLICY**

### **SACRED HEART SCHOOL IS A CHILD SAFE SCHOOL**

#### **Rationale**

A fundamental belief for Catholic schools is that in Jesus is seen God's image and likeness in its human expression, and that Jesus' values and teachings show all people 'the way, the truth and the life' (*John 14:6*). In accordance with this belief, values to be promoted within a Catholic school's understanding and practice of pastoral care include love, respect, compassion, tolerance, forgiveness, repentance, reconciliation and justice.

Pastoral care of students in the context of this policy refers to action taken within a school by its leaders and community members to promote and enhance student wellbeing of a personal, social, physical, emotional, mental or spiritual nature. Key elements of student wellbeing are positive self-regard, respect for others, positive relationships, responsible behaviours and personal resilience.

Pastoral care of students is effected in many aspects of school life, and especially in a school's vision and mission statements, policies, procedures, programs, teaching and learning curriculum, student activities, student support and wellbeing services, behaviour management processes, family engagement, community partnerships, and school climate.

Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM) expects every Catholic school in the Archdiocese of Melbourne to formulate its own policy on Pastoral Care and related policies and procedures in areas such as special needs provision, student behaviour code, student behaviour management, safe school environment (anti-bullying), and critical incident management. Such policies and procedures should be consistent with the principles expressed in this policy statement and be compliant with relevant legal requirements.

#### **Principles**

1. Foundational to the nature of pastoral care in Catholic schools is the belief that each person is created in the image and likeness of God (*Genesis 1:27*), with the inherent dignity that this implies, and all are created as social beings, with the mutual rights, obligations and needs that this implies.
2. Pastoral care in Catholic schools affirms and gives expression to the belief that 'the person of each individual human being, in his or her material and spiritual needs, is at the heart of Christ's teaching: this is why the promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic school.'
3. Schools exercise their pastoral responsibilities under the leadership of the Principal. Parents exercise their responsibility by providing positive support and collaborative engagement with the school in support of student and school community wellbeing.
4. Respectful and cooperative school-family relationships provide an effective channel of pastoral care for students. Schools and families share responsibility for developing and maintaining such relationships of trust, characterised by respect for the goodwill of the other and a willingness to engage collaboratively.
5. Student wellbeing is best achieved within a school environment that is safe, supportive, inclusive and empowering, where diversity is respected and valued, where human rights and the common good are honoured, where inter-relationships are positive, where students experience connectedness and engagement, and where those experiencing difficulty or special need receive particular care and support.
6. Enhanced student wellbeing contributes significantly to improved student learning outcomes. Effective pastoral care is therefore recognised as promoting the achievement of learning outcomes and thus contributing to a School Improvement Framework.
7. Effective whole-of-school approaches to pastoral care require age-appropriate behavioural education and skilling of students, and pastorally driven management of student behaviour through processes focused on both individual and community wellbeing, and on ensuring a just and reasonable balance of individual and community rights, needs and responsibilities.
8. Effective school-community partnerships offer opportunities for networks of pastoral care for students. Appropriate local services and agencies may be identified, and links or partnerships developed, to support the needs of students and their families and to enhance the school's own pastoral initiatives.

## **Procedures**

**Policy development and review.** A school's pastoral care policy, and all related policies and procedures, should be developed collaboratively and reviewed periodically. They should be published and readily accessible to staff, students, parents and guardians.

**Safe and supportive learning environments.** All Catholic schools are expected to have policies and procedures in place to address issues of bullying, harassment, child abuse and neglect. [The National Safe Schools Framework](#) is the appropriate model and resource by which schools can develop, implement and monitor their policies and procedures.

**Management of critical incidents.** Procedures are required for ensuring appropriate care for individuals and for the school community in times of stress, for example if there is a critical incident or a death in the school community. Support is available to school leadership personnel and school communities through the CEM. Schools ought also have arrangements in place for engaging external providers of care when needed.

**Student behaviour management.** Student behaviour management in Catholic schools ought to seek to protect personal and school community safety, heal destructive behaviours, restore relationships, encourage reconciliation, enhance wellbeing, foster responsibility, enable personal growth, and promote the common good.

The accompanying CEM [Guidelines for Student Behaviour Management](#) present guiding principles, expectations and recommended procedures for developing and implementing behaviour management policies and procedures.

**Negotiated transfer of students in circumstances of a serious nature.** In some serious circumstances, a change of school or a move to an alternative setting may be judged the most appropriate means by which a student's wellbeing can be responsibly supported or restored. Such a change, known as negotiated transfer, offers opportunity for personal growth, and for a fresh start in an environment more suited to the student's needs and circumstances. Negotiated transfer may also be an appropriate move by which the wellbeing of a school community can be protected (e.g. when a student's continuing presence poses a threat to that community's safety).

Schools are to develop their own policy and procedures in relation to negotiated transfer. The accompanying CEM [Guidelines for Student Behaviour Management](#) present CEM expectations and recommended processes.

**Serious wrongful behaviour and expulsion of students.** Under the most serious and extreme of circumstances, when a student has repeatedly engaged in serious wrongful behaviour and all other appropriate behaviour management processes have proved unsuccessful and the serious behaviour persists, it may be judged that the only responsible action left is expulsion. This is to be avoided in Catholic schools wherever possible. Only the principal has the authority to expel a student, having sought the prior approval of the diocesan Executive Director of Catholic Education.

Schools are to develop their own policy and procedures in relation to expulsion. The accompanying CEM [Guidelines for Student Behaviour Management](#) present CEM expectations and recommended processes

## **Notes and References**

- Key legislation affecting pastoral care policy and procedures include the *Working with Children Act 2006* (Vic); the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic); and the *Children and Young Person's Act 1989* (Vic).
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos 1878–1882.
- *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, no. 9. Quotation is from Pope John Paul II, *Address to First National Meeting of the Catholic School in Italy*, Nov 1991.

For information and resources available under the Australian Government's *National Safe Schools Framework 2004*, visit the website of the [Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations](#) (DEEWR).

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