# Catholic Schools - Pastoral Care, Wellbeing and Antibullying Policy

# Section 1 - Purpose

(1) The purpose of this policy is to provide support and guidance for Catholic schools in the Catholic Diocese Maitland-Newcastle(the Diocese) to promote a positive school environment that prioritises relationship and community.

(2) This policy provides a framework for the development, implementation and evaluation of an integrated whole school approach to student pastoral care, wellbeing and behaviour.

(3) This policy and related procedures will guide everyday practice to promote, manage and support all integrated aspects that contribute to student welfare – pastoral care, wellbeing and safe behaviour.

(4) This policy and related procedures will also inform the development of School Specific Statement of Practice to be implemented at a school level. These documents will provide specific details relating to the school context to support the successful implementation of this policy and develop strong student welfare systems that detail clear school responses to unsafe behaviours.

# Section 2 - Scope

(5) This policy applies to all school workers, parents and students in Catholic schools.

# Section 3 - Responsibilities

| ROLE | RESPONSIBILITIES |
|---|---|
| The Bishop | Placement of student pastoral care within the context of the core work of the Church, which is the formation of the human person.The pastoral care of the Diocesan community.Ensuring that wellbeing is framed as part of the Christian (Catholic) formation of every young person in dialogue with faith, life and culture.Ensuring Catholic Schools (CSMN) has in place effective and appropriate policies and practices for the pastoral care and wellbeing of students. |
| The Parish Priest | Nurturing the spiritual health and wellbeing of the domestic church within the context of the parish and its Catholic school.<br><br>Ensuring a quality of relationship including the support of the faith community of the parish to families and students.<br>Faith leadership that accompanies and supports the school community. |

| ROLE | RESPONSIBILITIES |
|---|---|
| Director of Catholic Schools | Ensuring that student pastoral care and wellbeing is placed within the context of school communities of faith which nourish and strengthen students' capacity to be whole and to flourish.Ensuring prioritisation of a whole school approach for student formation with a focus on pastoral care is articulated in system and school improvement plans.<br>Resourcing supporting procedures, structures, personnel, and professional learning.<br>Monitoring compliance and continuous improvement within this policy and related procedures through existing processes, e.g., School Improvement Plans, COSI validations and School Visits.<br>Overseeing the implementation of this policy and related procedures.<br>Dissemination of student pastoral care, wellbeing and safe behaviours information.Facilitation of Diocesan-wide professional learning and formation in student pastoral care, wellbeing and safe behaviours and related procedures.Support, resource and coordinate Professional Learning and formation for the Leaders of Wellbeing and Engagement and other school workers responsible for student pastoral care, wellbeing and safe behaviours in schools.Consult and support in the development of School Specific Statement of Practices, managing and responding to behaviour that presents a risk to student pastoral care, wellbeing and safety. |
| School Principals and Leaders | Prioritising student pastoral care, wellbeing and safe behaviours within the school community and school strategic and annual plans.Planning, embedding and evaluating a sustainable, integrated and whole school approach to student pastoral care, wellbeing and safe behaviours within the school's overall vision, Catholic faith, and philosophy of learning.Promoting a shared belief and understanding that all school workers and students are responsible and accountable for contributing to a positive, safe and supportive learning environment that is foundational to student pastoral care and wellbeing.Ensuring all school workers are aware of relevant policy, procedures and responsibilities related to student pastoral care and wellbeing.<br>Aligning and assessing all school worker roles and responsibilities against the Pastoral Care, Wellbeing and Safe Behaviour Policy and related procedures, including the formation of a Student Welfare team to champion this policy, if applicable.<br>Consulting and including the school counsellor and other school wellbeing workers in the whole school approach to student pastoral care and wellbeing.<br>Promoting a culturally safe, inclusive and responsive environment for students with diverse needs.<br>Supporting well-planned and evidence-informed student wellbeing and behaviour support programs based on student needs, school and community data and guided by the multi-tiered systems of support framework.Communicating, liaising and collaborating with parents, parish priests and the diocesan community to develop a shared understanding of student pastoral care and wellbeing and promote an inclusive school culture. |
| School Workers | Embracing a collaborative approach where all school workers are responsible for supporting a whole school approach to student pastoral care, wellbeing, safe behaviours and an inclusive learning environment.<br>Developing positive, authentic student relationships that value the dignity of the person and promote connection, safety, trust and respect for all, including students with diverse needs.<br>Actively engaging in professional learning opportunities to address identified pastoral care and wellbeing needs of the school community.<br>Building collaborative partnerships with parents/carers and the parish and broader community student supports.<br>Embedding this policy and related procedures that drive programs and initiatives across the school, guided by the multi-tiered system of supports.<br>Explicitly teaching Catholic principles, social and emotional skills, physical health, safe and responsible student behaviour and school expectations with reference to curriculum, this policy and relevant procedures and any School Specific Statement of Practice. |

# Section 4 - Policy Principles

(6) The guiding principles of Catholic schools in the Diocese are:

a. belief in the dignity, value and equality of each person where all students, staff, parents and members of the school community reflect the image of the creator; and
b. grounding in the vision that at the heart of everything, there is always Jesus Christ.

(7) Catholic schools in the Diocese educate:

a. from and for a community of Faith;
b. from and for Excellence in Learning; and

c. in rigorous, creative and critical pursuit of Truth.

(8) The guiding principles of this policy are to:

a. promote a positive school environment: encouraging respect, inclusivity, a sense of belonging, relationships and communion with others, reflecting the relations of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit and living as disciples of Jesus;
b. reinforce positive behaviours: implementing strategies to support and reward positive behaviour;
c. ensure safety, dignity, value and equality of each person: protecting the physical and emotional wellbeing of all students, parents/carers and school workers as reflecting the image of God while shaping the world around them; and
d. provide pastoral care: offering support for students' personal, social, emotional and spiritual development.

# Section 5 - Subject Areas to Support this Policy

(9) Each subject area summarised below consists of an associated procedure to support the implementation of this policy.

| Subject Area (Procedures) | Summary of Principles |
|---|---|
| Student Wellbeing and Pastoral Care Policy | Catholic schools are committed to the wellbeing of all students dependent upon, and nurtured through positive, authentic relationships that value the dignity of the person, promoting connection, safety, trust and respect for all.Student wellbeing is integral to school engagement and successful learning, which is a key contributor to positive lifelong wellbeing outcomes.Parents have the primary responsibility for the development of their child's wellbeing. It is important for families and communities to collaborate as partners with the school to support attendance, student learning, safety, and wellbeing.Student wellbeing is most effective through a whole school approach and when:<br><br>1. prioritised by leadership and adequately resourced;<br>2. students are active participants in their wellbeing;<br>3. embedded within policy, curriculum, culture, and everyday practice;<br>4. explicitly taught;<br>5. grounded in Catholic teaching and tradition; and<br>6. implemented using a multi-tiered system of support. |
| Student Voice and Leadership Procedure | Catholic schools are committed to developing a culture of inclusiveness where all students of the community are heard, respected and valued in school-based experiences, conversations and decisions that directly impact their wellbeing and pastoral care.Student voice is directly linked to student wellbeing and important in informing decision-making when reflecting on the teaching and learning environment, culture and pedagogy.<br><br>Formal student voice and leadership structures provide accessible opportunities for students to advocate for themselves and their peers, formally participate in decision making and represent their student body within and beyond the school grounds.<br>From and for the Catholic Social Teaching Principle of Subsidiarity. |
| Uniform Procedure | Catholic schools support the wearing of school uniforms, which promotes a sense of belonging for students and creates a positive identity for the Catholic school community.<br><br>School uniforms provide a strong sense of identity and contribute to inclusiveness and equity in schools.<br>School uniforms also contribute to the personal safety of students by allowing easier recognition of students inside the school and in the community. |

| Subject Area (Procedures) | Summary of Principles |
|---|---|
| Positive Behaviours for Learning Procedure | Catholic schools will take a proactive and positive approach to developing expected standards of behaviour among all its students by adopting approaches where all students enrolled are supported and encouraged to:<br>1. participate positively and engage in their learning and in their community;<br>2. demonstrate positive and respectful behaviour that will contribute to an inclusive and safe school environment;<br>3. have the opportunity to self-advocate as active participants in their own learning and wellbeing; and<br>4. feel connected to and use their social and emotional skills to be respectful, resilient and safe learners.<br>Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) is the supported and proactive approach across all Catholic schools, for all students to be supported in building positive relationships, school engagement and successful learning that are foundational to wellbeing.When a response to a behaviour error is managed within a proactive and positive framework such as PB4L, it has a direct link to school engagement, successful learning and student wellbeing.A response to behaviour error is most effective when it is clearly defined, proportionate to either the risk or impact of the behaviour, made with regard to all circumstances and contributes to reducing the risk of future behaviour errors.<br>All reasonable adjustments for students with a disability need to be in place when assessing behaviour against this policy and related procedures and guidelines. In the event behaviour related to a disability occurs without appropriate adjustments being in place, consideration needs to be given to the appropriateness of the response in the context of the disability, reasonable adjustments, risks and impacts of the behaviour.<br>The following are key elements of behavioural support and response in Catholic schools: Prohibition on the use of corporal punishment: corporal punishment in all forms, across all learning settings, is expressly prohibited. Elimination of Restrictive Practices: the Diocese seeks to, over time, eliminate the use of restrictive practices in all of its schools.Procedural Fairness will be afforded to all students (and where applicable school workers or others) in determining the response. |
| Safe Behaviours and Support Planning Procedure | Catholic schools are committed to responding to a Behaviour Error that constitutes unsafe behaviour by undertaking safety planning to ensure a return to a safe and supportive environment for all students.The level and process of safety planning required when responding to unsafe behaviour is determined by its type, severity, impact of the behaviour for those involved and previous patterns of this behaviour.General Safety: all safe behaviour and support planning and its implementation should seek to ensure the physical and emotional safety of all workers, students and members of the community impacted by the unsafe behaviour. Psychological Safety: all safe behaviour and support planning in relation to unsafe behaviour should seek to ensure the psychological safety of all workers, students and members of the school community impacted by a behaviour error/s<br><br>Behaviour Support Plans: (equates to individual safety planning and support) assist schools in providing additional support and guidance to identified students. All reasonable adjustments need to be in place when assessing behaviour against this procedure. |
| Anti-bullying Procedure | Catholic schools have a mandated duty to take reasonable care for the safety and wellbeing of students while at school or while involved in a school related activity. This duty is supported through a whole-school approach to preventing bullying, promoting respectful relationships and fostering safe learning environments.<br>A holistic whole-school and whole-community approach to anti-bullying includes:<br>1. preventing bullying through explicit teaching and promotion of respectful relationships;<br>2. responding to reports of unsafe behaviour and behaviour confirmed as bullying through clear procedures for reporting, investigating, recording and responding;<br>3. partnering with students, families, school workers and the wider community to promote a culture of safety and shared responsibility; and<br>4. implementing evidence-informed practices, monitoring effectiveness and reviewing anti-bullying approaches to meet student needs.<br>Procedural fairness will be afforded to all students (and, where applicable, school workers or others) in determining the response.<br>Matters may be referred in accordance with the Complaints Resolution Policy if there is a belief that a matter has not been dealt with effectively. |

| Subject Area (Procedures) | Summary of Principles |
|---|---|
| Suspension, Expulsion and Exclusion Procedure | Catholic schools including principals and teachers have a legal and moral duty of care to provide a safe and supportive environment for all students and a healthy and safe workplace for all school workers.<br>There will be some instances where a student's behaviour is such that, in the best interests of the student and/or community, a response is required amounting to suspension, expulsion or exclusion for disciplinary reasons or to manage immediate risk to the school community.<br>Any decision of this kind must be made as a result of a procedurally fair process considering all factors of immediate unsafe behaviour and any documented, ongoing unfair behaviour patterns together with the school's support, response and risk mitigations.<br>A procedurally fair process should usually be determined prior to the process commencing, and the process adopted should be commensurate with the seriousness of the allegations made or issues raised. The process should also be proportionate to the potential consequences of the findings and may be altered to remain proportionate as further information becomes available.<br><br>The civil standard of proof (being a balance of probabilities) is applied and assessed in accordance with the Briginshaw principles, that is, the more serious the consequences, the more evidence in the affirmative is needed to substantiate a finding.<br>Procedural Fairness will be afforded to all students (and, where applicable, school workers or others) in determining the response.Matters can be referred in accordance with the Complaints Resolution Policy, if there is a belief that the matter is not dealt with effectively. |

# Section 6 - Consequences of Breaching this Policy

(10) Any worker found to be in breach of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, including where a serious breach occurs, dismissal.

# Section 7 - Notations

(11) If there are any inconsistency between a policy document in existence before the commencement of this policy, and a policy document developed after the commencement of this policy, the later applies to the extent of the inconsistency.

# Section 8 - Document Review

(12) This policy will be reviewed when there is a legislative change, organisational change, delegations change or at least every 3 years to ensure it continues to be current and effective.

## Status and Details

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| **Status** | Current |
| **Effective Date** | 27th November 2025 |
| **Review Date** | 27th November 2028 |
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| **Unit Head** | Jacqueline Wilkinson<br>Director Catholic Schools |
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## Glossary Terms and Definitions

**"Catholic school"** - Is one which operates with the consent of the Diocesan Bishop and is one where formation and education are based on the principles of Catholic doctrine. It includes primary, secondary and K-12 schools.

**"Worker"** - A person who carries out work in any capacity for an employer or 'Person Conducting a Business Undertaking'. This includes: • employees; • teachers; • educators; • contractors; • apprentices; • clergy; • religious; • student placements; • trainees; and • volunteers/unpaid . In the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, 'worker' includes those who carry out work in diocesan parishes, within diocesan agencies and as a part of the diocesan curia.

**"Wellbeing"** - Feeling comfortable, healthy and happy in various aspects of your life. Not just the absence of illness or injury, but the presence of a positive mental state, a positive sense of self and belonging. In relation to students: strong student wellbeing builds skills to make positive and healthy choices to support learning and achievement. It encompasses the multidimensional and interconnected domains of cognitive, emotional, social, physical and spiritual wellbeing.

**"School Specific Statement of Practice"** - A School Specific Statement of Practice outlines the implementation of Diocesan Policy Documents requires a specific application within the school context. School Specific Statement of Practice does not replicate any information already contained in the Diocesan policy or procedures but provides context about how the school will implement the documents in each unique context.

**"Pastoral Care"** - Pastoral care fosters the physical, emotional, academic, social, moral and spiritual growth and wellbeing of every person. In the context of Catholic Schools, Pastoral Care is integrated throughout the teaching and the learning process, faith formation, and the enduring relationships within the community.

**"Unsafe Behaviour"** - Any act or behaviour that puts the safe and supportive environment of any members of the community at risk. Unsafe Behaviour is determined by the impact on the people involved and not the intention of the person with the behaviour.

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