Catholic Schools - Enrolment Policy

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) This policy sets out the principles and prioritisation for enrolment in Catholic schools in the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle (the Diocese).

(2) Catholic schools in the Diocese are also required to comply with all requirements relating to enrolment set out in the Education Act 1990 (NSW), and to the extent of any inconsistency, the Education Act applies.

(3) Catholic schools in the Diocese are also required to ensure that its enrolment policy and practices comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) and Disability Standards for Education 2005.

Section 2 - Scope

(4) This policy applies to all school workers and parents/carers of students seeking enrolment at a Catholic school in the Diocese.

Section 3 - Responsibilities

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES
Parish Priest	Provide specialist advice to the Catholic school or Enrolment Committee to assist with enrolment prioritisation.
Director of Catholic Schools	Lead the commitment to the policy principles.
Head of School Improvement	Develop Diocesan- wide procedures and process to support the implementation of this policy, and ensure appropriate resources are available to schools.
Principals	Lead and oversee school staff compliance with this policy. Including ensuring all school staff are aware of the policy and their requirements. Seek support from the Catholic Schools Maitland-Newcastle where required for effective implementation. Seek support from Student Learning and Support Team for students with disability.
Teachers and school workers	Implement this policy when making decisions about enrolments.

Section 4 - Policy Principles

Guiding Principles

(5) The following guiding principles apply to this policy.

(6) Catholic schools in the Diocese are:

a. for all:

i. ‘Because we are Catholic – in the love and teaching of Christ we reach out to all. All families and their children, Catholic or non-Catholic, are encouraged to apply for enrolment at a Diocesan school.’ [1] ;

b. distinctly Catholic:

i. ‘The Catholic school is the principal educational arm of Catholic families, parishes and the wider church.’ [1]; and

ii. ‘The duty and right of educating belongs in a special way to the Church … assisting persons so that they are able to reach the fullness of the Christian life.’

c. committed to providing high-quality education:
    i. students, parents/carers and staff are educated in our Catholic story, traditions, and beliefs with students’ experiencing a culture of high expectations, deep learning and a sense of belonging for all;
d. committed to respectful partnerships:
    i. students, parents/carers and staff agree to respect and support the Catholic identity of the school, in honouring the commitment to the holistic development of each child;
e. providing a pathway of schools from P-12:
    i. families will be offered a pathway for their children from St Nicholas Early Education to Year 12;
f. committed to collaboration:
    i. active engagement with parents/carers, parishes, diocesan agencies and the people they serve, will ensure continued growth and sustainability of enrolments across the Diocese;
g. responsible for the inclusion and safeguarding of all:
    i. we welcome all students, including those with a genuine inability to pay fees, those who are marginalised and/or those with diverse needs, prioritising safety, welfare and wellbeing, to maximise positive student outcomes; and
h. committed to diverse learning needs:
    i. our student population broadly reflects the diversity of life and culture across the Diocese, with enrolment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with disability, students who speak English as an Additional Language or Dialect and students with exceptional ability, and our schools actively engage in promoting an appreciation of this learning diversity.

1 Catholic Schools at a Crossroads: Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of NSW and the ACT (2007)

Commitment to a Catholic Education

(7) Families who wish to enrol their child in a Diocesan Catholic school must demonstrate a commitment to Catholic Education.

(8) A commitment to Catholic education when considering priority of enrolment for secondary education generally means enrolment at a Diocesan primary school from kindergarten, however the following situations will also be considered:

a. enrolment at a Diocesan primary school from the commencement of Year 4 for priority enrolment for secondary schools;

b. enrolment at a Catholic school in another Diocese from Kindergarten or at least the commencement of Year 4 for priority enrolment for secondary schools;
c. any other relevant factors that demonstrate a commitment to Catholic education; and
d. extenuating circumstances such as significant distance from feeder primary schools (ie. rural and regional areas), moving residential locations or schools, particularly from outside the Diocese.

Catchment areas and pathway schools

(9) Catchment areas and Pathway school will be designated by Catholic Schools Maitland-Newcastle and are subject to change.

(10) Whilst every effort will be made to accommodate students at their catchment or pathway school, this cannot always be guaranteed. Acceptance into a school in your catchment area or pathway school is subject to the enrolment process and prioritisation.

(11) Changes may be required due to new schools, demand, capacity, changing demographics or other priorities of the Diocese.

(12) Catchment areas for secondary schools will reflect the collective primary schools' catchment areas.

(13) Catchment areas and pathway school do not apply where the student is seeking enrolment in a school of a kind or other specialised setting.

Enrolment Prioritisation – Primary Schools

(14) Enrolments in Diocesan Primary Schools are subject to an assessment as to whether the learning environment is suitable to the needs of the student seeking enrolment.

(15) Enrolments for Diocesan Primary Schools will be prioritised in the following order:

a. siblings of students currently enrolled in the Catholic primary school to which the application is being made;
b. Catholic families living within the school's catchment area (in priority order):
    i. Catholic families that have strong demonstrable links to the local Catholic Parish;
    ii. Catholic families who participate irregularly in the life and worship of the Parish;
    iii. Catholic families who do not participate in Parish life but whose children attend a Diocesan St Nicholas Centre; and
    iv. Catholic families living within the school's catchment area that do not participate in Parish life.
c. families whose children attend a Diocesan St Nicholas Early Education Centre and live within the school's catchment area;
d. families of other christian denominations living within the school's catchment area and committed to supporting all aspects of Catholic education; and
e. other families living within the school's catchment area and committed to supporting all aspects of Catholic education.

Enrolment Prioritisation – Secondary School

(16) Enrolments in Diocesan Secondary Schools are subject to an assessment as to whether the learning environment is suitable to the needs of the student seeking enrolment.

(17) Enrolments for a Diocesan Secondary Schools will be prioritised in the following order:

a. students currently enrolled in a Diocesan Catholic primary school who have shown a commitment to Catholic education and are enrolling into their pathway Catholic Secondary school;
b. siblings of students currently enrolled in the Catholic secondary school to which the application is being made[2];
c. Catholic families from non-pathway schools living within the school's catchment area;
d. families of other christian denominations living within the school's catchment area and committed to supporting all aspects of Catholic education; and
e. other families living within the school's catchment area and committed to supporting all aspects of Catholic education.

2 For the avoidance of doubt, siblings of students currently enrolled in a Catholic secondary school means a student enrolled on the date the new enrolment application is made.

(18) Students currently enrolled in a Diocesan Catholic primary school who are enrolling into their pathway Catholic Secondary school or transferring to another Diocesan Catholic primary school or Catholic Secondary school are only eligible for priority 1 or 2 if all outstanding fees have been paid in full or the terms of a formalised payment arrangement has been complied with.

(19) Upon transferring to another Catholic primary school or Catholic secondary school parents and carers must honour all new and existing fee obligations or negotiate a special arrangement/fee concession with the Principal

(20) In situations where there are more Pathway school applications than available places in the above priority number, in assessing the order of priority for students within this category, the Principal will consider a range of factors to determine the enrolment priority and will submit this criteria to the Director of Catholic Schools for approval. These factors must balance the educational needs of the students with the needs of the school and the other Diocesan Catholic schools, and may include: a commitment to Catholic education, Catholicity, proximity of the child's home to school, ease of home to school, interview process and involvement in school activities at the feeder school, and age, school readiness and development of the child.

(21) In situations where there are more applications than places available within the above priority number 2, the following order of priority will apply:

a. children of Catholic families (using the priority order in clause 27); and
b. children of non-Catholic families.

(22) In situations where there are more applications than places available within the above priority number 3 for Secondary Schools and priority number 2 for Primary Schools, Catholic families (and its sub-categories) will be used to rank these applications. The sub-categories will be assessed first on need in accordance with guiding principle (g) "responsible for the inclusion and safeguarding of all":

a. Catholic families that have strong demonstrable links to the local Catholic Parish;
b. Catholic families who participate irregularly in the life and worship of the Parish; and
c. Catholic families who do not participate in Parish life.

(23) In situations where there are more applicants than places available within any of the priority numbers above, a waitlist will be created by the school. The position on the waitlist will be subject to the enrolment prioritisation for Primary and Secondary Schools.

(24) A student's position on the waitlist may be impacted where a student of a higher priority in the enrolment prioritisation for Primary and Secondary Schools is seeking enrolment at a school that currently does not have any places available.

(25) The ability to accept a student into a Primary or Secondary School will always be subject to the number of places available at a school and where there are no places available, a school may be unable to offer a place at the school.

Out of catchment area enrolment requests

(26) Out of catchment area enrolment requests will be considered by the Principal of the Diocesan Catholic school at which enrolment is sought, who will consult with the Principal of any Diocesan Catholic school in the relevant catchment area for the family.

(27) Requests to enrol in a Diocesan Catholic school that are outside the designated catchment area are not guaranteed.

(28) Out of catchment area enrolment requests must be supported by compelling/extenuating reasons as to why the request should be considered.

(29) The Enrolment Appeals Committee can review decisions made by the Principal on application by the family following the relevant procedure.

(30) Any recommendation made by the Enrolment Appeals Committee is final and the procedures of the Enrolment Committee will apply.

Exceptional Circumstances

(31) There may be some extraordinary situations, where due to exceptional circumstances, a student's application can be re-classified as Priority 1 or 2 for enrolment into a Catholic school

(32) Special consideration may be given for the following examples of exceptional circumstances:

a. A Catholic student (wishing to enrol in a Catholic Secondary School) who was unable to enrol in their local Catholic Primary School due to exceptional circumstances such as residential location and/or mobility.
b. Family situations necessitating a pastoral approach or requiring the exercise of compassion.
c. Students or prospective students who have been identified for a scholarship in the following areas including academic, sport, performing arts or any other identified area.
d. Parents/carers intentions about their own and/or their child/ren's journey, in becoming Catholic.
e. Families that are not baptised but are practising members of a Catholic Parish.
f. Students currently enrolled in a Diocesan Catholic School who require a move to another Diocesan Catholic School and/or learning environment more appropriate to their needs such as a school of a kind or other specialised setting.
g. The special education needs of students such as enrolment at a specialised school, special assistance school or other specialised setting.
h. Family situations where the Catholic student's visa status has changed to now allow enrolment in a Diocesan Catholic School.
i. Late applications from Catholic families due to work or family commitments forcing a move to the Diocese, such as parents/carers employed by the Australian Defence Force or NSW Health. In schools where the principal identifies that a significant number of enrolments come from such families, the principal may elect to hold a reasonable number of enrolments for students from Catholic families from these backgrounds.
j. Families (wishing to enrol in a Catholic Secondary School) who have enrolled their child in a Catholic Primary School after Year 4 where the secondary principal is confident of their commitment to Catholic education.

(33) The principal, with assistance from Catholic Schools Maitland Newcastle, is permitted to assess the student's application and make a determination for exceptional circumstances on a case-by-case basis.

(34) This is an overarching consideration and does not form part of the formal prioritisation.

(35) When deciding on exceptional circumstances, principals and the Catholic Schools Maitland-Newcastle may request further evidence/information to support the application and request.

Complaints and Feedback

(36) All complaints and feedback are handled in accordance with the Complaints Policy and Procedure and where the right of appeal exists for a school enrolment decision, the Catholic Schools Enrolment Appeals Procedure applies.

Form of Application

(37) Families must apply to a Diocesan Catholic School using the nominated enrolment form or process including providing all required information and supporting documentation.

Enrolment at a School of a Kind or other specialised setting

(38) The Diocese also offers enrolment at a school of a kind that provide specialist and intensive support in a dedicated setting for students with moderate to high learning and support needs.

(39) Diocesan schools of a kind support students with intellectual disability, mental health issues or autism, students with physical disability or sensory impairment, and students with learning difficulties or behaviour disorder.

(40) Diocesan schools of a kind include specialised schools and special assistance schools.

(41) Specialised schools enrol students using the disability criteria prescribed by the NSW Department of Education which includes the following:

a. Language disorder;
b. Physical disability;
c. Intellectual disability
d. Hearing impairment
e. Vision impairment
f. Deaf/Blind
g. Mental Health Problems; and
h. Autism.
i. Special assistance schools primarily enrol students with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties

(42) Diocesan schools of a kind limit their enrolments to students who have the characteristics outlined in clauses 39 and 41

(43) The Diocese may establish within an existing non-specialised school a class or stream intended to meet the needs of students who may otherwise be eligible to attend a Specialised School or Special Assistance School, and where such is established, priority for enrolment will be determined as if that class or stream was a Diocesan Specialised School or Special Assistance School.

(44) Enrolment in a Diocesan Specialised School or Special Assistance School, once the criteria for enrolment based on specific characteristics is met, will follow the relevant Enrolment Prioritisation for Primary Schools or Enrolment Prioritisation for Secondary Schools and set out in clauses 15 and 17.

Section 5 - Notations

(45) If there is 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 latter applies to the extent of the inconsistency.

Section 6 - Document Review

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

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	14th February 2025
Review Date	14th February 2028
Approval Authority	Bishop
Approval Date	14th February 2025
Expiry Date	To Be Advised
Unit Head	Jacqueline Wilkinson Director Catholic Schools
Enquiries Contact	Catholic Schools

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Parishes" - Is the local parish as defined by its geographical boundaries. "… is a certain community of the Christian faithful stably constituted in a particular church, whose pastoral care is entrusted to a pastor (parochus) as its proper pastor (pastor) under the authority of the diocesan bishop." (Can. 515§1)

"Catchment area" - The geographical area (influenced by the Parish Boundaries of the Maitland-Newcastle Diocese) in which student enrolments are accepted for a particular Catholic school. The School Catchment Area document is available on the Catholic Schools Maitland-Newcastle website.

"Catholic families" - Families in which the child/children are baptised in the Catholic faith including Eastern Rite Catholic Churches and the enrolling parent/s or carer/s are supportive of a Catholic education for their child.

"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.

"Disability" - Has the meaning as described under the New South Wales Anti-Discrimination Act 1977, Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and the Disability Standards for Education (2005).

"Enrolment Appeals Committee" - A committee convened to make recommendations about enrolment decisions where a relevant party has commenced an appeal, along with any other escalated and complex enrolment applications as required. Contributors may include the School Principal from the child's local catchment area, the School Principal from the school where the enrolment is sought and/or a Parish Priest and/or subject matter expert.

"Pathway school" - Geographical linked schools that operate as an Early Education to Year 12 pathway to provide students with an enriched, integrated educational and faith development experience. Details of pathway schools will be available on the Catholic Schools website.

"Agency" - Diocesan agencies may also be referred to as directorates. Diocesan agencies are intra-diocesan organisational structures that have been established and developed in the life of the church, to undertake good works and services on behalf of the Diocese and have the capacity to bind the Diocese to its actions. For the most part, but not exclusively, diocesan agencies are led by executive directors. Examples of Diocesan agencies include:
• CatholicCare Social Services Hunter-Manning; • Catholic Community Fund (including Catholic Development Fund Maitland-Newcastle (CDFMN)); • Catholic Schools and the diocesan systemic schools; • Hunter Community Housing; • St Nicholas services including Early Education centres and Out of School Hours Care (OOSH) services; and • Shared Services, which is inclusive of multiple specialist tertiary providers to diocesan parishes and agencies, that forms part of the Diocesan Curia.

"Policy Document" - Codes of Conduct, Governance Policies, Operational Policies and documents such as procedures and guidelines which are subordinate to policy and support the implementation of policy.

"Safeguarding" - Safeguarding is a set of guiding principles that came to prominence in the UK. Safeguarding children are the actions taken to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. Safeguarding means: • protecting children from abuse and maltreatment • preventing harm to children's health or development • ensuring children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care • taking action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcomes. Child protection is part of the safeguarding process. Safeguarding of vulnerable adults is based on the English Care Act 2014 and require that persons assessed as an 'adult at risk' are protected from abuse or neglect and that intervention is based on six principles: • Empowerment: putting people first and helping those who lack mental capacity feel involved and informed • Protection: supporting victims so they can take action • Prevention: responding quickly to suspected cases of abuse • Proportionality: making sure what we do is appropriate to the situation and for the individual • Partnership: sharing the right information in the right way • Accountability: making sure all agencies have a clear role

"St Nicholas" - St Nicholas is an agency of the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle that provides a community in which children and young people develop the cultural, spiritual, physical and educational skills to belong in a contemporary world. Collectively, St Nicholas provides education services spanning early education (EE), out of school hours care (OOSH) and vocational education (Pathways).

"Families of Other Christian Denominations" - Families in which the child/children are baptised or a member of a Christian Denomination other than the Catholic faith and the enrolling parent/s or carer/s are supportive of a Catholic education for their child.

"Other specialised setting" - An educational setting or subset of a school or class to establish a group with specialised needs such as students with disabilities, additional or diverse learning needs, students who are the children of foreign nationals or high potential and gifted students. The Diocese may also determine to establish a specialist class or cohort with a Diocesan Catholic school where the enrolment is treated as a school of a kind such as a specialist assistance school or specialised school.

"School of a Kind" - A school of a kind includes schools registered with the NSW Education Standards Authority as offering education of a kind for children who need special instruction because of sensory, physical, intellectual or emotional disabilities. Schools with registration for education of a kind develop their own curriculum which is not necessarily based on the NSW syllabuses to meet the needs for a children of a kind enrolled at the school. Special assistance schools and specialised schools are examples of a school of a kind.

"Special Assistance School" - Is a school that has been, or is likely to be, recognised by the Minister as primarily catering for students with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Special assistance schools will be required to demonstrate they primarily enrol students with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. St Laurence Flexible Learning Centre Broadmeadow is recognised by NSW Education Standards Authority as a special assistance school in the Diocese.

"Parish" - Is the local parish as defined by its geographical boundaries.