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# PASTORAL CARE POLICY FOR DIOCESAN SYSTEMIC SCHOOLS

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November 2012



## PASTORAL CARE POLICY

### PURPOSE

The Diocesan Schools Board affirms that, consistent with the Diocesan Mission Statement, each Catholic School has a special responsibility for the pastoral care of students. This policy (supported by the Diocese of Broken Bay Pastoral Care and Wellbeing Framework for Learning), is to be adopted by school communities to develop their own pastoral practices and procedures.

### POLICY FRAMEWORK

#### Catholic Context

Pastoral care in Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Broken Bay is based firmly on the Catholic worldview and the Christian vision as expressed in the following statements:

#### **Pastoral Care...**

**... has as its focus the life of Jesus Christ.**

*I have come that you may have life and have it to the full.* (John 10:10)

*The Catholic worldview perceives Jesus as God's Son, who saved us through his life, death and resurrection, and through whom we enter into the life of God.*

Pastoral care in the Church and hence in a Catholic school draws its expression and strength from the life of Jesus Christ. In Jesus we see God's paramount expression of love, compassion, reconciliation and justice. In Jesus we experience God as a caring shepherd who is faithful to the flock, who knows them intimately, who frees and saves.

Jesus demonstrates by his own life what we have been created to be — fully human, fully alive and able to participate in the life and love of God. It is this vision of human life which the Catholic school communities of the Diocese of Broken Bay seek to embrace and emulate in their approaches to pastoral care.

**... is concerned with the dignity and integral growth of the person.**

*God created humankind in God's image.* (Genesis 1:27)

*The Catholic worldview perceives each human being as a unique person created in the image of God, having an inalienable dignity that is always to be respected.*

We are made in God's image and at the core of all the Church's pastoral action is a deep respect for the innate dignity and uniqueness of individual persons.

As an agent in the mission and ministry of the Church, the Catholic school aims to offer to all a vision and experience of learning that is an exercise of love (cf, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, n15). In a community that provides a strong sense of wellbeing, belonging and security, students are given every opportunity to be affirmed in their dignity and worth, confirmed in their personhood, and assisted to grow to the fullness of their potential.

**... is a responsibility entrusted to all members of the faith community.**

*All members may be concerned for one another. If one member suffers, all members suffer: if one member is honoured, all members share this joy. You then are the body of Christ.* (1 Corinthians 12:25-27)

*The Catholic worldview perceives an imperative to proclaim to others the love we receive from Jesus, by loving them as Jesus loves us.*

In the Catholic school community responsibility is entrusted to all members — students, parents, staff, clergy, administrators — to contribute to one another's growth and journey

towards wholeness. Likewise, the dignity of parents and their noble place as prime educators of their children is respected and affirmed.

It endeavours to provide to all the experience of high quality interpersonal relationships of care and support. Thus each member is both a provider and recipient of pastoral care.

**... is a force for healing, reconciliation and liberation.**

*I shall look for the lost one, bring back the stray, bandage the wounded and make the weak strong. I shall be a true shepherd to them.* (Ezekiel 34:16)

*The Catholic worldview perceives the action of the Spirit in the world, inviting and empowering all people to respond to the divine love.*

The Scriptures present God's work of redemption fully realised in Jesus, and it is in and through Jesus that we learn to be a welcoming, forgiving and reconciling people. A Catholic school community immersed in the Gospel of Jesus and filled with his Spirit is committed to the values of compassion, tolerance, forgiveness and reconciliation. Pastoral care supports and provides a context for the growth and expression of these values in all aspects of the school's life.

**... is an expression of and commitment to justice.**

*He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, and set the downtrodden free.* (Luke 4: 18)

*The Catholic worldview perceives an obligation to work to create social conditions in which the unique dignity of each person is respected and all human rights protected.*

The pursuit of justice for individuals and communities has long been a core focus of the mission and ministry of the Church. Pastoral care in our Catholic schools endeavours to uphold and sustain policies and practices that foster the values of mutual respect, responsibility and service within the community. A commitment to democratic processes, co-operation and concern for the common good are principles that students are progressively encouraged to emulate in their relationships with others.

A school community needs to respond with increasing sensitivity to the social and cultural diversity of its members.

It is in and through pastoral care than much can be done to promote respect and to support such things as diverse family structures, different ways of giving expression to Christian faith, and awareness of cross-cultural issues. School policies and practices must be respectful of the dignity, rights and fundamental freedoms of individual students and must provide learning opportunities for individual students which are responsive to their unique needs for growth and fulfillment.

**National Safe Schools Framework Context**

This policy is underpinned by the following guiding principles from the National Safe Schools Framework (2011) that represent fundamental beliefs about safe, supportive and respectful school communities. These guiding principles emphasise the importance of student safety and wellbeing as a pre-requisite for effective learning in all Catholic school settings.

**Our Diocesan Catholic schools**

- affirm the rights of all members of the school community to feel *safe* and *be safe* at school
- acknowledge that being safe and supported at school is essential for student wellbeing and effective learning

- accept responsibility for developing and sustaining safe and supportive learning and teaching communities that also fulfil the school's child protection responsibilities
- encourage the active participation of all school community members in developing and maintaining a safe school community where diversity is valued
- actively support young people to develop understanding and skills to keep themselves and others safe
- commit to developing a safe school community through a whole-school and evidence-based approach

## **POLICY CONTENT**

Pastoral care refers to action taken within a school to promote and enhance personal, social, physical, emotional, mental and spiritual wellbeing. Optimal wellbeing is characterised by positive feelings and attitude, positive relationships with others, resilience and satisfaction with self and experiences and engagement in learning.

### **Pastoral Care and Wellbeing Framework for Learning for the Diocese of Broken Bay Schools System**

This framework utilises the National Safe Schools Framework (2011) ensuring that schools in the Broken Bay Diocese meet the objectives of the NSSF at the same time as meeting our vision for pastoral care and wellbeing. Schools in the Diocese of Broken Bay will utilise the framework to create safe and supportive learning environments.

The framework includes ten pathways that are intended to assist school communities to create safe schools that foster wellbeing for learning and positive, caring relationships.

The ten pathways are:

1. Leadership commitment to pastoral care and wellbeing
2. A supportive and connected school culture
3. Policies, structures and procedures
4. Professional learning
5. Positive behaviour approaches
6. Safe school learning and teaching
7. Student wellbeing and student ownership
8. Healthy lifestyle development
9. Early intervention and targeted support
10. Partnerships with families, parish and community

The characteristics of each pathway and guidelines for implementation are developed in the *Diocese of Broken Bay Pastoral Care and Wellbeing Framework for Learning* and associated support documents.

Pastoral care is based on the respect and dignity of the human person. In the Catholic school setting this calls for distinctive understandings of relationships, teaching and learning and community.

## **Relationships**

Pastoral care grounds the school's Mission Statement in the quality of daily relationships. The ways in which people interact with each other in the daily life of the school significantly affects each person's sense of well-being, identity and self-worth. Everyone in the school community has a responsibility to foster quality interpersonal relationships amongst teachers, students, parents, support staff, priests and parish communities.

All members of staff have a significant role to play in modelling the importance of building and maintaining relationships grounded in mutual respect, dignity, fairness, reconciliation, restoration, compassion and justice. They have a responsibility to ensure that their response to gender, cultural background and family circumstances supports student learning outcomes. All staff members need to be known as caring, compassionate adults who take a genuine interest in the lives of their students and who set appropriate boundaries within those teacher-student relationships.

A human person centred approach focuses the school towards the realisation of the potential of each person and at the same time nurtures the experience of belonging to the school community. School structures, therefore, ensure that each student has access to a smaller group where the student is known personally. Furthermore, structures and administrative practices are intended to promote the positive interaction between staff and students.

### **Teaching and Learning**

The primary expression of pastoral care in a school is through the dynamics of teaching and learning and in the congruence between the statement of purpose and mission of the school and the total curriculum. The school curriculum, therefore, should be comprehensive and inclusive based on quality learning for all, characterised by contemporary pedagogical practices and responsive to the individual learning needs of students. It needs to be responsive to students with special needs and should aim to redress educational disadvantage brought about by such factors as socio-economic status, gender, ethnic origin or race.

Students are to be given opportunities to become reflective, self-directed learners capable of negotiating the curriculum around meaningful, relevant tasks. Fair and just assessment procedures will be utilised.

All dimensions of teaching and learning should promote students' ongoing formation in self-discipline and personal responsibility with schools establishing, developing and managing environments in which students learn to respect rights and fulfil responsibilities. The rights of teachers to teach and students to learn in a safe and supportive school environment are valued and protected.

### **Community**

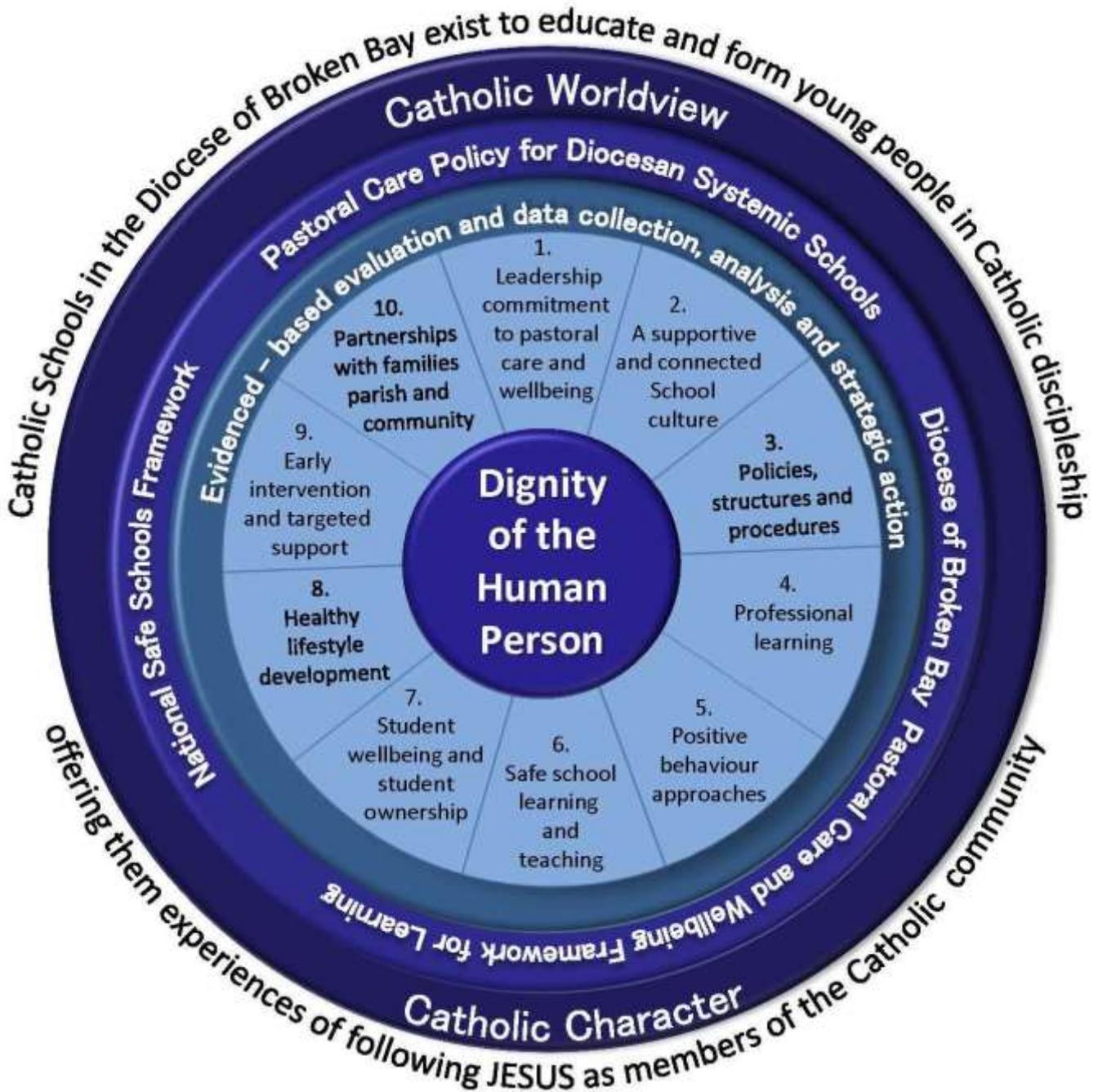
The school community values hospitality, inclusion and empathy. A vital sense of community in the school offers a safe and supportive environment in which learning can occur and in which staff members feel valued, empowered and affirmed. The school community particularly supports students at risk.

The community dimension of pastoral care supports the development of parent, parish and diocesan partnerships. Based on relationships of trust and co-operation, schools have an orientation that empowers families, strengthens relationships between home, school and parish. Schools need to be respectful of diverse cultural and family structures, and supportive of families in crisis.

A commitment to establishing effective networks of care is an integral feature of pastoral care. It is important that schools ensure that all support services within and beyond the school community are identified and that strong links are established with all the agencies and groups with related or complementary functions.

## DIMENSIONS OF PASTORAL CARE IN THE DIOCESAN SCHOOLS SYSTEM

The following diagram provides an overview of the dimensions of pastoral care in the Diocese of Broken Bay and the various contexts in which they are situated.



**Related Policies and Guidelines**

- Diocese of Broken Bay Pastoral Care and Wellbeing Framework for Learning
- National Safe Schools Framework 2011

*Additional Policies and Guidelines:*

- Acceptable Use Policy for Internet and Network Services
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Anti-Harassment Policy
- Behaviour Management and Student Discipline Policy
- Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures
- Creating Safe and Supportive School Environments - Child Protection Policy
- Cyber Safety Guidelines
- Drug Education and Management Policy
- First-Aid Policy
- Guidelines for the Management of Drug Related Incidents in Schools
- Injury Management Policy
- Medication Policy
- No Smoking Policy
- Nutrition in Schools Policy
- Occupational Health and Safety Policy
- P&F Healthy Fundraising Guidelines
- Risk Management Policy

**POLICY REVIEW**

The Pastoral Care Policy is to be reviewed periodically and not less frequently than once every five years from the date of implementation of policy.

**POLICY DATES**

Policy date of completion of formulation and adoption  
Revised and confirmed  
Date of next review

May 2000  
November 2012  
2017

authorised by  
**Bishop David L. Walker**  
Bishop of Broken Bay