

PASTORAL CARE GUIDELINES



ST MARY'S CATHOLIC

PRIMARY SCHOOL

PURPOSE

As a member of the National Wellbeing Initiative, BeYou, St Mary's Catholic Primary School affirms that, consistent with the Diocesan Mission Statement, it has a special responsibility for the pastoral care of its students. This statement is intended to provide all members of St Mary's school community with a framework for pastoral care.

POLICY FRAMEWORK

Pastoral Care at St Mary's 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 St Mary's seeks to embrace and emulate.

... 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, St Mary's 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. Likewise, the

dignity of parents and their noble place as prime educators of their children is respected and affirmed.

... 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.

At St Mary's responsibility is entrusted to all members — students, parents, staff, clergy — to contribute to one another's growth and journey towards wholeness. 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. St Mary's, 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 at St Mary's 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. St Mary's responds 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.

As the Lighthouse sheds light on the darkened ocean, so does the light of Christ shed light on the heart and minds of people. From the witness of Catholic educators emanates the light of the gospel message, faith, community and Christian service.

Statement of Interpretation of the Broken Bay

DIMENSIONS OF PASTORAL CARE

The following diagram provides an overview of the elements and relationships that make up Pastoral Care.

Human Person

Pastoral care is based on respect and dignity of the human person. 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 at St Mary's 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 modeling 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 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. For these reasons student-teacher interviews, parent-teacher interviews and school counsellor services provide opportunities to nurture individual growth.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

The primary expression of pastoral care in a school is through the dynamics of teaching/ learning and in the congruence between the statement of purpose and values of the school and the total curriculum. The school curriculum, therefore, shall be comprehensive and inclusive based on the principles of quality learning for all characterised by the use of quality teaching strategies 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 and 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. Pastoral care programs grounded in the Catholic worldview address the developmental needs of students such as:

- relationships
- drug education
- child protection
- peer support
- grief and loss
- sexuality
- self esteem
- values education

Such programs are intended to help students to value themselves and experience their own well-being whilst enabling them to contribute to building the school community. All dimensions of teaching and learning shall promote students' ongoing formation in self discipline and personal responsibility with St Mary's establishing, developing and managing environments in which students learn to respect rights and fulfill responsibilities. The rights of teachers to teach and students to learn in a safe and supportive school environment are valued and protected.

SCHOOL ORGANISATION AND CULTURE

Pastoral care in practice takes place every day. 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. The climate and experience of pastoral care can be significantly enhanced through various dimensions of school organisation such as: support for students in transition, leadership and peer support programs, effective responses to critical incidents and the development of an aesthetically pleasing school environment.

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 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 school partnerships. Based on relationships of trust and cooperation, schools will have an orientation

that empowers families, strengthens relationships between home, school and parish. St Mary's is 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. St Mary's ensures 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. St Mary's is supported by the Diocesan Schools Board, which is committed to a proactive approach to all aspects of pastoral care and will:

- provide information about procedures and support materials
- provide information and training as appropriate
- support and monitor implementation of this policy
- provide ongoing reports as to implementation of policies and procedures relevant to child protection to the Diocesan Schools Board.

POLICY RESPONSIBILITY

The Principal is responsible for the implementation and development of the school's Pastoral Care Policy and Procedures.

RELATED POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

- *Student Discipline Policy for Diocesan Systemic Schools*
- *Anti-Bullying Policy for Diocesan Systemic Schools*
- *Anti-Harassment Policy for Diocesan Systemic Schools*
- *Creating Safe and Supportive School Environment - Child Protection Policy for Diocesan Systemic Schools*
- *First-Aid Policy for Diocesan Systemic Schools*
- *Acceptable Use Policy for Internet/Intranet & Network Services in the Diocesan School System*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Policy for Diocesan Systemic Schools*

POLICY REVIEW

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

POLICY DATES

St Mary's Policy will be reviewed after the completion of the Diocese of Broken Bay Pastoral Care Policy Review - 2013, 2014, 2015, 2018. Next review: 2021

authorised by

Paul McGuire
School Principal